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Essay written by [REDACTED]

Titled: The rehabilitated lifer.

Lifer defined is a noun; Slang for one who's serving time under a life sentence. Yet, in prison the definition isn't distinguished from those serving time without such a term behind their sentence. This unjuxtaposed disintergrated pontification isn't to put no inmate above, nor below another, because when it boils down to it no crime can be redefined as a subtle action. The only query one should ever inquire into is how has this experience changed each indivisual personally. Whether it be for better worse, or unimproved development in the convicts human civility.

There are so many statistics researched and imbrued upon the never ending door of a revolving penal system, one can't help but to wonder why there's never statistics on inmates who have managed to succeed in not returning to such a desolate place. My opinion--it may be because many people aren't interested to the possibility of an ex-offender accomplishing success after his feeble minded past mistakes. And yet again, statistics are routinely casted out inquires of society's insolence--I say challenge the presumption, nothing is being done to portray the contrary.

Nothing!

In a report on the role of politics and private prisons in the incarceration boom; it was said that the media exploits

the public's fears to gain or maintain a politician's power; I would ask everyone involved then: "How can an ex-con or a current inmate who is looking forward to release be taken serious for a productive life. These schemes leave no hope when one is up against a politico system who collaborates with the media to assure a man who's repented for his crime has no chance at the parole board.

A politician's promise is always to be harsher on crime than his predecessor when he/she is in office. But when it comes down to it the ulterior motive is only to frighten voters into believing this specific candidate has the means to assure every single person's safety in society, a society which in the past has blamed violence in black communities on rap music. This is a claim that the media and politicians has used to give credence to their words. Tactics that consequently permeates the prison system and has a cause and effect result on decisions made by a parole board...Fear. (Parole Board: A public body responsible for passing upon applications for parole.) The term parole is defined as a noun or verb; The release of a convicted criminal from jail, or prison after serving part of a sentence on the condition that he stay out of trouble with the law and comply with other requirements; such as: meeting regularly with a parole officer. This is a condition that is garnered on a lifer's behavior inside of prison.

Good behavior in the black law's dictionary is a bit vague, it explains nothing about what a person's institutional record ought to look like before appearing before a parole

board of people who determines whether to grant a lifer permanent release.

Parole board and good behavior goes hand in hand in the process to which an individual serving any sentence is considered eligible for release. Good behavior in laymen terms is defined as; a prisoner serving a sentence and has complied with rules and stayed out of trouble while serving their time will have their sentence considerably shortened. But as with the parole board, if an inmate has a poor report over the years, he/she could have their sentence extended.

These reports could consist of fights, disrespecting of prison staff, distributing of drugs and also being involved in gangs. Nonetheless, these institutional rules apply to every prisoner, yet they effect lifers differently. An inmate without a life sentence or tail behind their term is practically free to disobey all of the rules inside a prison facility if wanted, and I assume this is likely happening in other prisons across the country, all because their time does not stop. Except if they're charged with another crime; conveyance of drugs and assault on a officer or any staff member then their sentence changes. However, even then their punishment isn't so stiff--Six months to a year maybe. Compared to an inmate serving a tail sentence who will be flopped five to ten years at the parole board for less than nothing, is peanuts. This sort of practice could be implied as systemic bias, (to refer you back to the paragraphs on politicians tactics to use the media for votes.)

But to add insult to injury--and I'm sure after serving twenty years or more, one truly regrets their mistake and has tried everyday to make up for it, though he/she knows nothing they do can ever change the past--the decision to be granted parole doesn't stop there. There's also another process, which entails a community body to decide whether an inmate should be released from prison and back into their population. And yes, some guys who go before these bodies does deserve another reality check for their failure to better themselves throughout their time inside. But what about those who have reflected on their decisions and has made the conscious efforts to turn their backs on altercations which would likely lead to more abuse because they decided not to defend themselves, or that has followed all the rules that were required of them, and yet was still given more time at the parole board. What awards does a man deserve for thinking before he reacts? Some would likely say none, that he shouldn't have committed a crime.

When a sentence is involved all crimes are analogized in categories to the prosecution. Then if rules apply to everyone how is it lifers are penalized differently from guys without a life sentence?

The contention is this: A lifer is defined by behavior and character in prison in order to be released. Of course there's a lot to be proven, but following the rules systemically are a major part of things.

For eleven years I've journeyed this path under a cloud of

judgment being that I am serving time under a life sentence, whether it be from staff inside the prison, my family, anxiety as to what the parole would think if I happened to get into fight, and more minute is the thoughts of other inmates. As a youth I feared other boys but if backed in a corner I would done all I could to defend myself. Now I fear no man, now I fear I will never see my mother again. My mission isn't to see whether I'm more physically stronger than another man, rather my mission is to prove I've become a better me, and am not the man I once was prior to this life. It is a mission with goals to make a positive difference before I leave this planet. But this mission can easily be derailed, because here in prison becoming a better man is constantly threatened.

Being surrounded by nearly 20 different gangs a productive character isn't no easy feat to maintain, and the gangs are just a peek of the problem. The change of becoming a better man is looked upon as a weakness and threatened by gangs and naive or easily influenced young men who doesn't seem to have the ability to think for themselves, or it's because their serving such a light sentence every decision they make here is a dried leaf in tumultuous winds, or it's likely that he's so committed to the gang he's in screwing up someone's chance at being paroled means nothing to them. The proclivity of their standards are kill or be killed, not in a literal sense most times but figuratively speaking. Obviously years ago the prison climate was a bit different, where guys doing time trying to keep a good report were normally subjected to beatings, and

sometimes maybe raped. Now prison is a parody of a bad neighborhood or terrible high school in some places. These young men are like disobedient teens and violent thieves, and have no regard for another's man's space.

The deck is stacked against a man like me. I'm strong, positive, and I'm optimistic that things can change, but in this current environment change seems to be meaningless, and not only in the eyes of inmates who normally are the one who immaturely have derisive discourse toward a rehabilitated man, but Correctional officers even find good behavior a sign of weakness.

In Ross correctional a Correctional Officer once ridiculed me as being soft because I chose not to make my celly move to a different cell all because the correctional officer disliked him. And here at N.E.O.C.C., a C.O. made fun of me because I chose to lock my door to avoid it being stolen out of. This sort of supervision is a voucher for tyranny, a slap in the face to the policy of rehabilitation. Such derisiveness is usually spilled by inmates, never would expect a C.O. to do so also.

It is bad enough when you're incarcerated among ruthless gangs compiled with guys whose mentality seems to have been forged in a fire of ignorance with no respect, how does a rehabilitated man make the strides to find purpose when these circumstances aren't changing.

I walk the halls among these guys, dreading the day I am forced to defend myself and jeopardize my chances of being paroled one day, and destroy my model inmate position; a title

that the penal system supposedly encourages, yet the training of the C.O.s toward this important accomplishment suggest otherwise. A man's sanity can only take so much of the contradicting doctrines toward the term rehabilitation. There is no one monitoring the well behaved, but of course there's naturally documentation of a man's ill behavior. The prison system claims to despise inmates who are misbehaving, however again--to go back to operations inside prisons--I've seen more times than I wished to have had, men who had previously fought one another to be placed in the same cell as another, or placed in the same unit. Here they're still walking the same halls as another and is in the same unit. How is this protecting the safety of an inmate and how does this rehabiltate a man? I've also heard C.O.s ridicule a man all because he refused to fight another person. Who determines whether either person is safe from the other?....

There is no safe haven for a man's good intentions behind bars when day in and day out he's put at risk to ignorance. A man serving a life sentence doesn't stand a chance with the parole board if he is mixed among gang members and immoral men. And I'm sure the penal system is fully aware of this issue, but instead of doing anything about it, they are set on having their pants up their asses and veiled by their supposed experience, how they know inmates, how they know how we think. The problem is ignored with indifference, and therefore violence and tyranny will proceed. Segregation and a twenty-three and one institution helps nothing.

Systematically, expectations of a parole board shouldn't be so high under these conditions, especially if nothing's being done to combat the guys who are easily influenced inmates who are stealing, for one; because their money is being siphoned from their books by the courts over fines, and two; because some of the young guys incarcerated feel there's no reason for a man to have purpose in prison, not even education is important, the only thing that matters the most to some of these guys is what the man they follow thinks.

My honest opinion; men with life sentences or serving ten years or more and has conformed to the rules of a prison and has a particular path he's engaged in should be placed in separate dorms, away from younger, or just ignorant men. This gives the polished inmates confidence in themselves, relief, and hopeful that someone will take notice of his/her progress inside. This also gives the institution an opportunity to see who's the trouble makers, simple as that. There are many men who wants to change but are unable to show this because there are powers involved who sees changes as a problem to whatever their purpose may be.

A person can always find some report on how much it costs to house inmates then it does to free one. If it costs so much what is there to gain to putting guys away for over thirty years? And why is it so hard to release a man after he's shown great efforts in proving he's a changed man? Yes, no crime against another person is ever okay, more so no crime period is okay, nonetheless, when statistics suggest that a low numb-

er of people is ever released from incarceration after going before Ohio's parole board then politicians' schemes in putting fear in society ultimately works like magic.

The system isn't right, in here and out there. Inmates serving life sentences should never be mixed among guys who does not have restrictions on their behavior, which a fight would land them in the hole, on the other side a man serving a tail sentence is risking more; hole time, extra prison time after seeing the parole board and lost loved ones.

I recently watched a documentary called: American jail. The documentarian spoke to a vendor who supplies the penal industry appliances. The distributor mentioned that most of the products they sell are ment to make an inmate as comfortable as possible during his/her stay in prison. The assumption that his products make inmates comfortable is truly disturbing because nothing in prison makes me comfortable. Knowing that just a brush of a shoulder with another inmate possibly could land me in a situation where I'll never see my family makes the assertion that something as small as furniture can make a man comfortable is a complete lie.

The only thing remotely close in being able to make a man comfortable is a comfortable environment around other positive inmates. But this must be a huge problem for those in charge. Everything about prison is uneasy; uncomfortable is the harsh water we drink from the faucet; uncomfortable is the belittlement of c.o.s who knows little of themselves let alone an inmate; Uncomfortable is being in the cell with another who

has every intention to steal from you once you go to work inside the institution; uncomfortable is the cots you sleep on with its thin strip of cushion, which is capable of knocking your hip out of place if slept on after year under the spring of the metal slab. I'll leave you with one more discription of uncomfortable; it is uncomfortable to be told that you must sign an admission slip to an item so that your child can use it when they come to prison, (these were words mouthed by a c.o. who was determined to make me upset.).

In here it takes more than just furniture or television or to make a man comfortable because when those things becomes boring you're still faced with the fact that you're doing thirty-three years to life, and must adopt a tough exterior if you ever plan on leaving this place.

How to prove I've been rehabilitated, and deserve a chance at freedom; Recently I listened to a man who had just went before the parole board. He was asked why recently did he have a ticket for stealing from the kitchen, and also realized that he new tatooes on his arms and saw there was no mention of it in his jacket, "did you get caught for the new tatooes you have?" they asked him. He responded with defensiveness, he wanted to know why didn't something so minor matter when the board released men who were rapist and committed worse crimes than he had, the same guys who gotten their numbers around time he did. The board ultimetely asked that he come see them in three years. The guy later confessed that he thinks the parole board tricked him into reacting the way did. He reali-

zed that he got himself three years.

I see the reasoning behind both perspectives--on one hand the parole board wanted to see what kind of person the possible parolee had become. On the inmates view of things, after twenty plus years I've only had minute tickets. Though minute we know nothing of one another.

Question: How can the parole board decide to discipline a man for a kitchen ticket when he had managed to avoid altercations with the numerous gangs flooding prison facilities, and also confrontations with c.c.s. Both caste are constantly provoking situations daily inside these walls--not specifically here, but institutions like mansfield, Lebanon and Ross is constant provoking taking place. Here it's gangs, and they seem to be more of a force than the institution itself.

There's a universal mission in life in which majority of the world lives by, and that is to conquer, even in this desolate place of shallow hope. I say this to say; it doesn't matter whether a person is incarcerated, most guys' intention is to conquer another's mind and his actions which gangs are accustomed to doing to their followers. C.o.s also have this tendency, they manipulate, they provoke and do other things their employers may not agree with, but their employers rarely care, as long as their job is being done then the show must go on.

I've managed to be unpersuaded by these games, completing programs that are expected of me, and managed to respect c.o.s that has supervised over me even when they could be disrespec-

tful themselves. I have done the things that have been expected of me, yet you can still be punished by being placed in situation that can land you problems that will in the future result in punishment. These things that were required of has-n't come without its errors and dignifying mutinies, but i've been able to these good things while tip toing around lions and surrounded by snakes. No one cares if a lifer has to go before a parole board and that's because they're not under the same perscribed rules.

Nothing can prepare no man/woman for the mental anquish they're destined to experience inside this place, of constant testing of dignity, manhood and humanity.

The sole purpose of Ohio's penal industry was to penalize and rehabilitate offenders who had committed a crime, the means of doing so are incumbent on programs that are beneficial inside and outside prison, education is also required for employment. Yet the only thing that isn't a requirement is behavior on the inside it seems. I'm reiterating this because I may have been a bit vague in explaining it before.

Inside these walls is a whole world of dictators who rule their sections of this society; gangs, c.o.s, warden--hell--even the head of a religious sect has this tendency. I have to admit, the're some gangs who keep things inside neutral, but there are those filled with a group of bacterial infections, whose actions will ultimately affect the way the entire institution is treated, and it's never a good result.

It's not always the guy in a gang that can destroy a man's

progress, but also the guy who's been in and out of prison for the last seven years and has returned and doesn't have a care in the world, because he has an out date, which is heard occasionally. It is also the guy who has just came down for the first time in his life at the age of 19, and is searching for direction, and unfortunately, he follows a direction that is never so right. He sets out on a rampage of chaos, he's pernicious and is willing to sabotage anyones' deliverance from this place, that goes for the guy who managed to keep his nose clean for years, and right up to his parole date the egotistical 19 year old offender, or the guy who has given the system four numbers, steals from a man, or punches a man who has a chance at parole, all so that his buddies can feast off the stolen things. By the end of it all, again the only person who gets severly punished for this unforeseeable mess is the possible parolee, all because he tried defending himself. But the guy who started it is headed home in six months. This is what is meant by there being no system in place to help a man to stay on his self-behaved mission. One who hasn't experienced these anxiety filled situations would say, "no one should have to babysit no grown man." Such a dogmatic opinion would agreed to, but what about those who does need an actual babysitter because they have no care for authority or anything for that matter. What, should they be babysat by the man on his way to the parole board? That notion would be an absurdity.

Though the few processes put in place to balance the behavior issues gives a man just a slight bit of relaxation, how-

ever they do not stop a thing. When I heard of the core civic correctional institution I was told that the requirements to be transferred to the this institution were the same requirements needed to be eligible for a merit position; a status inside of some prisons bestowed on inmates who has managed to keep out of trouble, but as with the transfer, you must sign up. The process to this transfer has been misconstrued. As of recently more and more guys who have been released from the hole in other institutions were sent here, "what, the rules that had applied to me, do they not apply to these others any longer?" Or does this prove my factual theory, or surmised theory shows that this system has little care to what circumstances one is put in inside of here?

The locating of inmates process is the job of the center of classifications, or members of an institution who is usually bumping heads with one another or co-workers because some feel their britches are bigger than the others. If these disputes determine who I am placed in a cell with then why does the parole board exist, or the entire behavior process if that's the case.

There's a superfluous notion I have for this problem, and it may sound absurd to some, but it's as simple as a conspiratorial collusion of an institutions administration, coupled with those above them whose sole purpose is to make sure the numbers of a prison's population is balanced, which means; there must be those who fill the general population and there are those who must fill the segregation units. It seems when it

boils down to it, it really doesn't matter who stays in or out of trouble because eventually throughout this process you will play a role in this scheme of intergrating and disintergrating, and it leads me back to one of my original questions--How do you help to rehabilitate a lifer?

There's never a simple answer, simply because none is needed. The solution is that a man/woman must learn to show how they have rehabilitated themselves. Rehabilitated their behavior, their mind and reshaped their character. This process creates a testament of who one is, despite the others who are indifferent to the strengthening of a new you. One must weave through this sporadic unfiltered process and find a lane that works for them.