

## WHAT IS JUSTICE

Throughout life it is safe to say that everyone wants to feel loved, wanted, and accepted. While everyone is unique, we can all learn from one another if we choose to see outside ourselves, when even the bully in life wants to be loved, wanted, and accepted. So the bully goes to extremes to feel as though he or she belongs. Meanwhile the bully creates a huge recipe for disaster. While most bullies feel socially rejected somewhere in life, they feel the need to hurt others and people who have been bullied. They know and feel social rejection in life as well. Social rejection increases feelings of meaninglessness and decreases self awareness, allowing one to believe it is ok to self regulate one's behavior. So how many people does it take to make a criminal? And let's face it, we are all criminals since none of us are perfect. There are bullies in every area of life, whether you're rich or poor. As the cardinal rule states: do unto others upon as you wish to be done unto you .

We can find acceptance in many different ways, whether they are right or wrong is the question. Such as to bully someone similar to the way you you fell victim of being bullied or being a bully is a sense of unhealthy acceptance. I believe true acceptance comes from loving yourself along with receiving love from others. So next time the bully takes your lunch money, you can invite the bully to pick up your piggy bank after school.

Most people would shun the bully only making the bully worse by socially rejecting them. Honestly, who wants to love a bully, or let's say a criminal, even though we are all a product of our environment.

While being in prison for the second time I have come to realize how many bullies there truly are in this world. And that bully could dictate you for the rest of your life especially when psychological abuse is way worse then physical abuse. And I believe social rejection is like a deadly disease.

As all of our actions have consequences though, do people spend enough time analyzing why and who influenced our actions? Why has our justice system failed us for so long when we live in the USA, the land of opportunity? The USA consists of 5% of the world's population although we make up 25% of the world's prisoner population . So do the scales of justice weigh one's heart while considering their well being to become a better person? Or does our justice system take those who have been socially rejected and believe it is ok to self regulate one's behavior and make them worse? Since most prisons offer very little correction and rehabilitation, why are people not court ordered to college or counseling, and why is there such minimal help out there for convicted felons? From 1990 until 2005 there were 544 detention centers built, that is one being built every 15 days . From 1980-2000 the prison population increased by 500%. It costs \$30,000.00 - \$80,000.00 per year to house one prisoner.

It appears to me that our justice and our corrections systems are only helping prisoners to feel unaccepted in life, while breeding a disease called social rejection in which can lead to a person to do desperate things to feel accepted. More than half of the prisoners from state prisons are arrested again within five years and our recidivism rate has skyrocketed as if it was the most profitable stock talked about amongst Wall Street .

Imagine the profit the phone companies make throughout these detention centers especially when the price of a fifteen minute phone call ranges from \$5.00-\$18.00. Being able to talk to those who truly care about us should be an important step towards everyone's well being and rehabilitation, instead, is like a struggle .



When idle hands are the devil's workshop, why is there so much idle time in prison? Along with being locked in a cell that is usually 8x10x8, give or take a foot or two depending the prison, is also idle time. The room will have a set of bunk beds for two people, 2 mattresses that are 2 1/2-3 inches thick, one pillow, a small desk, 2 lockers for your personal belongings, a sink, a toilet, a small garbage can, a plastic chair, a light, a couple shelves, and a mirror. Then they give you 2 bed sheets, one pillowcase, they issue you pants, t-shirts, underwear, socks, and a jacket. They give you a prison ID with your photo and prison ID number that you have to wear around your neck anytime you leave the cell.

Your loved ones can order you personal t-shirts, underwear, socks, sweatpants, sweatshirt, hat, gloves, shoes, tv, radio, books, towels, shower sandals, and writing supplies. And as for hygiene products they give you small bars of white soap, toilet paper, a small toothbrush, and some off brand toothpaste called Greenco that I have never heard of before coming to prison. In order to have dental floss, shampoo, conditioner, lotion, chapstick, Q-tips, brand name toothpaste, a normal size toothbrush, a razor, and deoderant you have to purchase these items from the prison commissary in which you need money sent in from your loved ones or earn a few dollars from a prison job. Imagine if all you had to take care of yourself was some cheap bar of soap and toothpaste.

There are jobs in prison though sometimes you wait months just to get a job. The job pays 12-42 cents a hour and for a lot of people who have court obligations, court fees, or child support, they take 50%-75% plus a additional 10% for your release account from any money earned or sent to you from loved ones. So a prisoner could work 80 hours just to get a stick of deoderant and a bottle of shampoo.

Prison will heighten your instincts for survival since a lot of things that used to come easy have now become an everyday struggle, as you learn who truly cares about you. You have nothing to offer and you need support. Without psychological or financial support, a prisoner can go crazy or get bitter.

So imagine being in this small environment called prison where anger and depression is dealt with on a daily basis. You are always having to be aware of your surroundings and watching out for those who are having a bad day, whether it is a prisoner or a correctional officer. Because this prison environment effects all of us psychologically and can play tricks on our psyche, causing our anger/depression to be expressed in many different ways. Anything from arguing, fighting, bullying, correctional officers abusing their power, and kindness can be taken for weakness. Although somehow or some way a person learns to adapt to this environment even though many attempt suicide while some are successful.

And during your stay at prison almost every prisoner will will receive a disciplinary report for a major or minor rule violation. Minor rule violations can be given for passing food/food items you are not allowed to share, listening to your radio too loud, or disobeying rules. Your punishment will be loss of recreation, loss of your electronics, loss of day room privileges, or cell confinement for 5-30 days. The main concern is to stay away from major rule violations because you will end up in segregation/isolation. Major rule violations include fighting, assaulting a correctional officer, having a dirty UA for drug use, having pornography, having homemade weapons, or disobeying direct orders from correctional officers. For violating a major rule you can spend 15-365 days in segregation/isolation followed by a possible indefinite term of time in isolation called administrative confinement.

When you get to the segregation building you have to strip naked in front of correctional officers. Then they have you open your mouth, check behind your ears, lift up your testicles, look at the bottoms



of your feet, bend over and spread your buttocks and cough. And they do all of this to see if you're concealing any contraband, like drugs, weapons, razor blades, gang literature, or pornography. Then you're given a pair of orange pants, an orange shirt, a pair of underwear, socks, and a pair of slip on shoes. Then you're placed in full restraints and led to a segregation cell .

Upon entering your new cell, you can only hope that the person before you kept the cell clean. Since the person that was in the cell before you sometimes leaves literally 20 minutes ago therefore leaving the unit worker 10-20 minutes to clean the cell, get your bedding, toothbrush, toothpaste, and soap. The toothbrush they give you is one inch long, cone shaped and fits on your finger. They also give you a pencil made of rubber which writes with such a light shade that it is hard to see. And they give you a rubber cup.

Then a few days later you will be given a few personal property items, only if you have them in your personal property. These include: personal bar soap , toothpaste , deoderant , a comb, a few personal books/magazines, your address book, stamped envelopes, writing paper, legal work, and a deck of playing cards. There is also a small library where you can request two books every few days.

This is also known as phase one of your segregation time in which you're in temporary lock up until your ticket is heard, or you can be placed in segregation for pending criminal investigation as well as being placed in segregation to determine if you will be placed on administrative confinement.

In segregation you will get three showers a week in which you also get a change of clean clothes. Some people choose to yell out there cell door all day long holding a conversation or reminiscing about their past. Some people bang on their steel doors making a beat/noise to try and rap too while they stress others out filling the tier with noise although they don't care. Some people lose their sanity, causing them to play with their feces or urinate all over the place. The noise, the rank smell, being isolated, and the sheer boredom, can truly effect a person's psychological well being. Welcome to phase one of segregation.

So once your conduct report is heard by the hearing committee of prison staff and correctional officers, you will be sentenced to 30-365 days in segregation. Through halfway of your sentence you will go to phase 2 of segregation. In phase 2 it is not as loud and you won't have to deal with mentally ill prisoners playing with their feces and urinating all over. You will also be allowed to have a normal toothbrush, lotion, your own shampoo, a plastic glass and food from the commissary if you have money, and eventually you will be able to earn the privilege of having your TV or radio .

You will also be given a cellmate and some cells only have one bed therefore the other prisoner sleeps on the floor with a thin mattress. Once your segregation time is over you will go back to general population or administrative confinement.

On administrative confinement you're isolated in a single cell locked down all day for a indefinite amount of time. Somehow they consider administrative confinement to be non-punitive even though it is the exact same as phase 2 segregation although you can have your tv and your radio. Prisoners are placed on administrative confinement when a warden, security director, or other prison staff consider you to be a threat to the security of the institution. A security risk could be on going criminal behavior, high ranking gang members and people who they feel will cause a disturbance to every day prison life or a disturbance to others. You will be isolated on administrative confinement no less then 6 months. Every 6 months the prison will have a hearing in which you can attend to see if the hearing committee will vote to place you back in general population. Most prisoners will be on administrative confinement



for at least one year. Prisoners have been held in isolation on administrative confinement for periods lasting 1-44 years. After spending months in isolation you start to feel as though you have been buried alive.

Whether you're on phase 1 segregation, phase 2 segregation, or administrative confinement, you will only be let out of your cell for 3 showers a week and 4 hours of recreation. Recreation is a 5x10 foot fenced in cage with a pull up bar that you will be locked in outside for one hour weather permitting. Once a week you will get clean bed sheets and a pillowcase while some sheets are soiled, smell bad, or stained, so hopefully the correctional officer is understanding in case you get bad bedding so you can exchange it. You also get to clean the cell once a week in which you get a small hand brush, dust pan, one rag sprayed with a bit of disinfectant, toilet brush, toilet bowl cleaner, a small paper lunch bag to use as a garbage can, and a mop for the floor. Every tier has about 15 cells so everyone uses the same mop water, toilet brush and broom.

If your family or loved ones decide to visit you, you will be placed in handcuffs and shackles before you leave the cell. Then you will be escorted to a room with 2 metal stools and a glass wall in between you and your visitor. You will be able to visit for 1-2 hours depending upon your segregation status.

No matter which status or phase of isolation you're on, whenever you leave the cell you have to be in handcuffs behind your back or shackled to your waist while the correctional officer holds your arm.

Meanwhile international law considers anything after 15 days in isolation to be torture. In isolation you're detached from humanity and the psychological effects of isolation can have on a person could be irreversible. The isolated cells full of prisoners will have a psychological effect on the correctional officers as well.

While isolation can cause irrational thoughts that lead to irrational behavior, some prisoners will refuse to shower for weeks or even months, while falling into a deep depression. After a while people start to hold conversations with themselves as well as hallucinating and hearing voices. At times it feels as though the walls are literally closing in on you, and a person starts to feel useless as if no one cares, while losing touch with reality. Some people go mad by repeatedly kicking on the metal cell door, punching the wall, or banging their head against the wall.

Your mind starts to play tricks on you and you begin to do anything to numb the pain. Some people will clog their toilets with clothes and flood the cell with water. Others will begin to play with their feces, eat their feces, while urinating all over the place. Then you have people who self mutilate themselves by cutting on themselves, or even swallowing things like a fingernail clippers, pens, or cleaning solution just to go to the hospital to escape reality. There is also people who can no longer stand the everyday torture and they commit suicide. Meanwhile, guards and prison staff say we act like this to get attention. Along with the fact that exposure to psychological pain and suffering can cause post traumatic stress disorder whether it is a long or short term experience.

In the year of 2016, there are 70,000 prisoners in solitary confinement at any given time and 38% suffer from mental illness. The world health organization states adverse health effects of solitary confinement include gastrointestinal and genitourinary problems, insomnia, deterioration of eyesight, profound fatigue, heart palpitations, migraines, back and joint pains, weight loss, diarrhea, and aggravation of pre-existing medical problems. They also found prolonged placement can lead to anxiety, depression, anger, diminished impulse control, paranoia, visual and auditory hallucination, post traumatic stress disorder, self harm, suicide, and psychosis.



There are all types of abuse in prison inflicted by prisoners, correctional officers, and prison staff. There is a (hands off prison doctrine) because judges keep their hands off prison administration therefore they run the prison as they see fit. Granted you can always file a lawsuit against the prison in which most prison lawsuits fall under the 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment rights. Although in 1996 the Prison Litigation Reform Act was passed making it difficult for prisoners to stand up for the constitutional rights. We have to exhaust all of our in house prison complaints on time before the deadlines or else the courts will refuse to accept your lawsuit. Then you also have to pay a \$350.00 filing fee when most prisoners are lucky to make .35 cents per hour.

On a daily basis throughout the U.S. Prisons there is sexual abuse, bribery, sexual conduct issues, rape, smuggling drugs, cell phones, or whatever a prisoner must need. There are fights, abuse of power by prison staff, excessive force by correctional officers, inhumane living conditions, and the list goes on and on. Though a small percent is put on the news so the community continues to assume everything is OK.

Even though there is a complaint system in prison, the complaint system is handled by prison staff that work inside the prison and more than likely have a rapport with whomever you're writing a complaint on. They assign us a social worker for roughly 100 prisoners, along with a ton of paperwork for them to file and keep track of. Therefore you will be lucky to meet with your social worker unless it's an emergency or your once a year review to see if you can go to a lower security prison.

As for self-help and rehabilitation groups go, you will be lucky to participate in 75-200 hours toward rehabilitation groups no matter how long your prison stay may be. While some prisons have programs to earn your high school diploma as well, along with offering limited technical degrees. Granted, there is some help and programs in prison although a lot of people psychologically get worse with so much idle time. Take the show Big Brother for example, while people living like kings and queens while playing a game show to win half a million dollars, though look at how emotional and distressed they become at times from being away from their loved ones or from social rejection. Though in prison you're not supposed to argue, fight, or have any problems even though you are living in very close living quarters, being forced to live with people you know nothing about, while being left to survive. And one day we are released back to the community, while some prisoners are more lost upon release than they were when arrested.

So please remember that prisoner's lives extend past the walls they're confined too. Since their lives affect their families, friends, as well as the community in which they're released too. So I ask of you to ask yourself, what is justice if it isn't the act of making some good come of something bad?

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