

"Return the Jail norm"

As a person who has did prison time on and off since 2000 I am writing this essay to offer suggestions to make incarceration less dreadful. First we need oversight bodies to regularly monitor and report publicly on conditions in correctional facilities. This recognizes that prisons and jails deprive our neighbors of their liberty, freedom, justice and equality. Yes, prisons and jails are horrific because the pain that be allow them to be. Eliminating this problem can be done by allowing advocates, clergy, attorneys and family members easy access visits to prisoners, so they observe the symbolic effect of imprisonment at its flaws in society. Furthermore, prisons and jails are the wrong place for the mentally ill. Speaking from first hand experience many of the men and women we see in prisons and jails are there because they are self-medicating, trying to ease their discomfort with designer drugs or street drugs because they don't like the adverse side effects of the prescription drugs that have been prescribed for them by a doctor. Research has shown that we can change that by investing the resources we have in finding ways to reach out and help these people that does not criminalize their behavior. Reducing access to drugs in prison and jail would curtail gang activity and make detention facilities safer for prisoners and staff. Finally, we need out and should not engage

in the practice of solitary confinement. Speaking from first hand experience, it is very wrong. Extreme social isolation is damaging and inconsistent with the desire to return people to their communities as productive members of society. When prisoners must be segregated, I feel the prison must take action to counteract the ill effects of extreme isolation by offering educational courses, pre-release classes, therapy sessions and contact information of community based non profits that provide assistance to the released person once their term has expired. So in conclusion, just know that whatever we do to our prisons to try to improve and fix them is just one battle in a larger war against injustice, corruption, inadequacy, and so on that plague our nation's entire legal system from one end to the other, and we as a people wait truly who until we start looking at the root causes and the major damage as well as all the little symptoms along the way.