The Realities of a Reality Show

by Jeremy Busby

When I think about all of the so-called "reform efforts" that various criminal justice advocates are pushing for within Texas, my favorite reality show "Flip this House" comes to mind.

For those who are not familiar with "Flip This House," it's a reality show that chronicles real estate investors efforts of buying deteriorating houses at a low price, renovate them, and return them back to the open market for a profit.

Some of these houses are still in a decent condition. Minimum restoration efforts are required - a new coat of paint, fresh carpet, a new countertop or two.

other houses are in a more penurious state.

These type of houses requires much more work. Oftentimes they have to be completely gutted. Because of their poor foundations, a new coat of paint - even a new set of windows and sinks -- would not enhance them any. In the terms of "reformation efforts" the state of Texas is the latter house.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), the state's prison agency, was built on a foundation of corruption, deception, and brutality.

Take for example the recent criminal indictments that were issued for various TDCJ officials for falsity of state documents. These TDCJ officials were indicted after an investigation revealed that they were planting contraband in prisoners cell, and later charging them with bogus disciplinary cases.

while TDCJ directorship had no other choice but to admit that these incidents did occurred, its spokesperson stated that these type of incidents are "RARE AND ISOLATED."

The criminal indictments in these cases are the only thing "RARE AND ISOLATED" in TDCJ. Historically, these type of criminal acts have been rampant within TDCJ, and numerous lawsuits filed by prisoners alleging such events support that contention.

Criminal justice reformist in Texas are currently for TDCJ to have an independent oversight committee. However, what these reformist fail to understand are the very sophisticated levels of deception that TDCJ has in place. This deception is powerful enough to circumvent any outside independent oversight committee.

The thought that TDCJ would be open and honest in any situation that would indict them, is like asking a mob boss to lead the FBI to dead bodies buried deeply in a landfield.

Just ask TDCJ former spokesperson John Hurst, whom was infamously fired by TDCJ for speaking factually and honestly to the press. Or, read Michelle Lyons - another fired TDCJ spokesperson -- new book. TDCJ aggressively forced its employees to avoid being factually honest with anyone outside of its ranks. That would include any independent oversight committee.

So the reality of the situation in TDCJ is that it has to be completely gutted. The current culture that has been handed down from one generation of directorship to the next, does not bode well for any other method of reform.

The first step is for TDCJ to hire a director from outside of its corrupted and tainted ranks. Like every other reputable state agencies, TDCJ should launch a nation-wide search for the brightest and most respected legal professionals to lead its prison system.

If those who are really concerned with meaningful change within the Texas prison system, a total transformation has to occur. The old foundation has to be completely eradicate, and a fresh slab of concrete - solid professionals, with solid integrity - has to be poured.

bio

Jeremy Busby has served more than 20 years of a 75-year sentence for murder. Currently housed in the Mark Stiles Unit, a maximum security facility in Beaumont, Texas, he is seeking exoneration for what he maintains is a wrongful conviction at age 21. Meanwhile, he has earned a graduate degree from the University of Houston - Clear Lake and is a former staff writer for TDCJ's prison newspaper. Readers' comments are welcome. Jeremy Busby #881193, Stiles Unit, 3060 FM 3514, Beaumont, Tx. 77706.