

"PUNISHMENT" OR "SUPERVISION"?

by James W. Harkleroad

There is a major error in the way that the criminal justice system is viewed. That error is the idea that the criminal justice system has been established to provide "punishment" to those who have been convicted of violating one or more laws of society.

The reality is that the criminal justice system provides an organized method to determine who requires supervision due to their lack of self-control. Said lack of self-control posing a risk of harm to that individual and/or other citizens.

This error - looking at the criminal justice system as a means of "punishing" wrongdoers - has resulted in a wide disparity of sentencing.

For example, a person who murders another person may be sentenced to life in prison, or even death.

Yet, a drug dealer - whose actions/activities support and promote all kinds of criminal conduct by a multitude of people, up to and including murder - may receive a sentence of a few years, or probation.

(The author is a former (1971, 1972) Death Row resident.)