

①

05/28/19

Hello, my name is Kareem Davenport and I am currently incarcerated in Menard Correctional Center. What I am about to do right now, is expose some of the cruel & inhumane conditions existing inside the prisons of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). Bringing awareness to these realities, is the first step we must take to change these realities, striving to make further and faster progress in Illinois.

I read about other state's inmates standing up for their rights righteously and civilly. They are striving for the changes that humanity demands. This is a battle we find ourselves in and as in all battles, to win it is 90% mental and 10% physical. The battle I want to talk about today, is how as prisoners we are striving to reduce recidivism.

However, when we strive to cultivate the one thing that is 100% known to reduce recidivism; further our education, we are prevented by I.D.O.C. from doing so. Statistics in Illinois show that the

②

average recidivism rate for those without any secondary education, is 67%. In 3 years. For those with a vocational certificate that rate is reduced to 13.4%. For those with an associates degree it is reduced to 10.9%. If you are released and earn a Bachelors degree, that rate is reduced to 5.9%.

Most inmates don't have a high school diploma or GED so they have to take that class first. Here in Menard that option is very slim. So for prisoners like me that have a high school diploma, there is nothing productive we can do in Menard. Even if a prisoner has life, his Life is not over. You can still live a very successful life as well as influential. As well there is always a chance of coming home one day.

Then there is personal development to be made as this is allegedly the mission of I.D.O.C.; to correct prisoners and make them into productive and useful citizens in the world. Rather behind these walls or in the world this is their mission. More than half of the inmates in Menard

③

that probably holds no more than 2,300 inmates will never get a chance to enroll in GED classes. Even though they desire to be enrolled. The reason for this is because of their security level and housing. Your security level can be high and you have never been in IDOC as well this could be your first time to jail. Most inmates that have a high security level upon arrival don't even have a disciplinary infraction in their background.

So because of this you are housed in the east or west house. The only inmates that are allowed to go to school are inmates housed in the north house. So if an inmate is sent directly to the east or west house upon arrival to Menard (as this is the case 97% of the time) because he has a security level that is high for unknown reasons, he has to stay there for a substantial amount of time before he can go to the north house.

An idle mind is the ~~devil's~~ devil's playground. So Menard is set up for recidivism rates to rise and for inmates to have no personal development.

(4)

As well all the prisoners do not have a long sentence. So because of ~~the~~ the high probability of never being enrolled in GED classes. He may go home never having learned anything while incarcerated and back in the same very sad condition he left from that led him to prison. He has not even recieved a chance to attain any positive skills to rise from poverty, as most prisoners come from. So he is only left with negative choices.

Then that still leaves prisoners like me, that have no chance. Atleast inmates that have no GED have a chance to get in school even if very slim. I have no chance at all. In the pursuit of bettering myself I have started a legal assistant/paralegal certification collage course that is done thru the mail. But I have to pay a steep price for tuition. Luckily I am allowed to pay on a payment plan.

There are alot of collage courses you can take thru the mail. But most are not available for various reasons, one being that we have

⑤

to find a proctor. A proctor is an administrative staff member designated by the facility to administrative exams. The proctor has to be able to receive exam materials thru the mail most of the time, and Menard has to provide the proctor. This is something IDOC does not provide. The second barrier to these collage courses is that the tuition is still the same price if you were actually attending the school. Federally Funded scholarships under law, so we have to pay the same price as students but are not allowed the same loans they are allowed.

Plus Even if we were, it would probably be hard to obtain as prisoners. Mind you, most inmates already come from poverty. They didn't have money to pay for collage at home and defiantly won't have it in here. This whole entire situation is in dire need for change. Education is the Key to the door that opens the best chances of becoming a successful productive person in life. A lot of conditions in IDOC seem to do just the opposite of its mission, it raises recidivism. If that rate can be reduced than the same inmates can come home and become apart of growing

(6)

the economy as a nation. Even if inmates may never go home, it is not to many limitations on what you can accomplish in prison. It may be harder but it is possible. Just because an inmate has 100 years doesn't mean he should be put in a pit or a dungeon and left there with nothing to do like a concentration camp. He should be given a chance to live. We can live a life that outlives our existence on this earth in a hugely positive way to mankind, no matter what, even imprisonment, we just need the chance,

Sincerely, Kareem Davenport

Kareem Davenport

M-49922