

First off I would like to give you a brief description of my life and my experience in the "system". My journey started at 13 years old in the Department of Youth Services. I am a mixed race boy raised by my mother who was African American and Indian but I looked completely white which was a barrier I faced in acceptance in the system. My family was poverty stricken living on government assistance plus my mother had her addiction problems (cigarettes and alcohol) which takes away from the children in the long run usually we see it more at the end of the month where our needs are taking over with her wants. Sometimes food was meager and after school (positive) interactions like sports were non-existent because of the lack of money in the household. Now I chose to hang out with the cool crowd which was the trouble makers which led me to the beginning of my early bad decision making. I was caught stealing or trying to steal a car which was burglary. My life was about to take a turn I never would've imagined on 9-24-1996 I was given a number in the "system", at first it was just a bunch of children in a bunch of buildings ranging from ages 12 to 17 all housed according to their ages. Now living in a small town I am not familiar with gangs and the game at my age so I was a victim an easy target. We was given new clothes and 3 meals a day plus a snack. The food was great desserts, double cheese burgers, and things that I was not having at home everyday.

Which automatically registered that I was eating better than I was at home this is what I get for being bad or getting in trouble, sweet. Then the fights began between 2 big cities and I was involved for no reason except that if I was in a crowd I was less of a target to the bullies. That lasted around 35 days of all out brawls and code blues everyday. On the other hand when the fighting slowed down we had a game room and a gym that we could enjoy I thought if this is punishment I get better treatment here than at home, just im in a big fence. I got approved for my transfer, this place had no fence, you could get as much food as you want, they had a swimming pool and basketball teams. This isn't a punishment it is what good kids experience with money. Fights was just a part I had to deal with as a young boy. Fast forwarding I ended up going to the Department of Youth Services 5 more times each time trying to get better at being a criminal because the punishment is easy. Well I was getting into fights with the Juvenile Correctional Officers (JCO's) now and these are professional caretakers that have the responsibility to ensure our safety. You would be amazed at how short a temper a grown adult would have towards a smart mouth child. I was beaten badly on two occasions bloody and bruised I learned to keep my mouth shut.

The education here was very easy to learn all you had to do was just behave and the teacher would most likely pass you. There was a lot of different things that happened but I did not have first hand experience so I will not mention it. I hope my description was enough to enlighten you on the mind state that a future criminal may have. I was under the impression that punishment was a joke never once was I in a program that lets us know the penalties as an adult. I was surrounded by criminals all day learning new ways to keep me from not being hungry or going without. My mind became all criminal thoughts with the belief that I would make it. My birthday came in 2000 I am 18 years old and I have a GED with no experience in anything besides crime and now in using drugs. Upon release I was out about 5 months then I caught my first felony as an adult a drug charge. Never had a conviction before never had a rehab or treatment facility but I did have an excellent track record in the juvenile "system". Eight months in prison to the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. No sweat I been through this before jail is a joke and behold everyone I grew up with were there but my common sense didn't register with the picture that theres no future in being a criminal. So I did my time as a number and got out right back to the streets because that wasn't enough to make me change my ways and the fast life I have become accustomed to.

Well I was out and in before the seasons changed with another charge revolving around drugs. No type of treatment offered, straight to jail for a 10 month sentence. That happened 3 more times for a total of 5 different prison visits that has me here right now serving a 51 year sentence for violent charges stemming from a life of drug abuse and lack of knowledge of living the right way. Now I am 36 years old and have realized who is to blame ultimately which is me but the system made it so clear to me that it's not that bad and that if you don't have the money you aren't going to get the help you need for your addiction problem.

So I have realized that the "system" preys on the weak and illiterate. Mostly people in poverty who have grew up learning ways of older criminals or even family members are perfect ~~candidates~~ candidates for the "system". The prison system knows exactly what it's doing by not informing its customers of living right because they would be out of business and that's not ideal. We are to be rehabilitated is thrown around so carelessly by officials to the public, wheres the proof? I cannot get a honest answer out of 90% of the people paid to rehabilitate me, just what I want to hear so they can keep on going or doing what they were doing before I asked them my question.

The brutality that goes on in the system is notorious but is accepted because of the animals (inmates) that they deal with daily. There are people in here that absolutely break the rules to wear physical force needed to restrain them is unavoidable, but that should not automatically label every other inmate to that category. Even if they are in the wrong they will cover ones back and write what needs to be to get them completely off the hook. The cameras only see what they want you to see those are also officers monitoring those cameras. Now I am older I am finding answers in experience and not giving into the simple ways I once had but it has taken me from 13 to 36 in and out of the system. Now the epidemic of drugs is running rampant in the system and the country I can only think that maybe the system is becoming exposed and doing everything in its power to stay in operation. I have seen some overdoses in prison and majority of every drug that I had access to while I was free and it shows no signs of slowing down, coincidence I doubt it people are noticing what is going on with their lives and they are done settling. Also if you are convicted once you are probably guilty the next time, 100% sure the third time because you are considered a career criminal. So people will take a plea deal to get to prison faster.

The county jails have small food portions and a very expensive commissary. I have shopped at every store known to man and still have never seen a ramen noodle soup for \$1.09 until I was in county. Every thing comes to one source money I do not know the numbers but the prisons profit handsomely off of the labor that is allowed by the United States Constitution. We are affected by elections but cannot vote so I cannot choose my path or the paths of my children because I lost my voice as well as my freedom. So I will give you my observation of this system and let you hear my voice about the way people are punished for being weak minded and contributing to the destruction of families in the lower class because of the little knowledge they are given or shown from lack of positive family or role models. This system will take a great person and turn them to a statistic with no problem. I have adopted the theory that I am more of a financial asset than a human being to this system. My firsthand experience given to you to see with the truth in between the lines if you are willing to look.