

What is life like in an Alabama prison? The answer for thousands of men and women is simple: Hell. The State of Alabama has for decades proved its inability to operate safe and humane prisons for the amount of people it wants to incarcerate. For the first time in the history of the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act, the Department of Justice found the entire Alabama men's prison system in violation of the Constitution. The DOJ report details everything from crumbling infrastructure and horrible living conditions to overcrowding, Rape, murder, extortion, assaults and an out of control drug problem. Back in 2014, the DOJ investigated Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women and found evidence of Rape and extortion. Conditions there were bad then; now they are much, much worse. The DOJ has not even looked at Alabama's various holding facilities and work releases. Access to healthcare and mental health services is an uphill battle at best.

The State of Alabama has for decades used prisons to warehouse men and

women. They use us as commodities in whatever way they need for whatever gain they want at the time. They play us against the public and the public against us. We hear, "you're just inmates", the public doesn't care. They hear, "they are violent and dangerous", you don't want them out. Neither of these statements are completely true. The truth is somewhere in the middle. There is so much wrong in this state, from the judicial system to the parole board, that it is hard to know where to begin to fix the problems that plague the prison system in this "lock them up and throw away the key" mentality the lawmakers have adopted. The Alabama public needs to question. They need to question where their taxpayer money is going and for what. It's not being used to ensure public safety and it's not being used for the inmates. Unless they are on death row or serving life without parole, the public needs to know that both violent and non-violent offenders will return to society at some point in time and those offenders have been nothing more than warehoused. Alabama

prisons are overcrowded. The gangs that float around the prisons and work releases breed the violence. There is a feeling of hopelessness that exists day-in and day-out. It's hard to maintain a positive attitude in such an environment, but there are inmates who want to return to society a better person than who we were. There are inmates, violent and non-violent, who want rehabilitative programs and for those programs to mean something. We want to be able to function and be productive; not a drain on resources needed by others. The system is set-up for failure because inmates are leaving prison more criminally minded than when they entered. Right now an inmate can do everything the state recommends.

They can take what classes are offered, can have no behavior problems or acts of violence, have no "dirty" wives and still be denied for parole despite meeting the criteria. Why? Here's what the public does not know.

For many, when the state denies parole they turn around and give them

what is called mandatory release, which means "get out." The state does this because they make more money. Parole is cheap. Mandatory release is not. This in turn leads to people returning to prison because they can't afford the fees and be able to live too or to new criminal charges.

For violent offenders the situation is worse. Parole being granted is almost unheard of at this point in time and there is no mandatory release. The new director of the parole board, C. Graddick, stated that he did not believe a violent offender could ever be rehabilitated. Well, I, and the rest of society hope you are wrong, because violent offenders do get out of prison. Parole should not be about retrying someone's case. That job has already been done. We're already convicted. It should be looking at what you have done with your life and your time since your sentence began. It should be an individual assessment.