

American Prison Writing Archive
Hamilton College
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4/7/20

Impossible?

The recent virus crisis brings to light a need for (6)ft of separation of people to stop the spread of disease. But in our prisons that separation is impossible - even (4)ft of separation is mostly nonexistent. Most prisons are (2) men to a cell, ~~in~~ a cell that's 8x10ft or 10x12ft in size. But Michigan, like some other states, has cubes and dorms, also, to house prisoners - where (6)ft spacing is also impossible.

I'm housed at the Kinross Correctional Facility (KCF), which is pole barns with (8) man cubes. (160) men in half the building which is a "Unit". The cubes are each 12x18ft in size. (4) bunk beds, (8) lockers, (8) chairs, and (1) table. (6)ft of spacing - how? (Bunk beds only give you maybe (4)ft.) Impossible!

Now because of this virus + the general library operation has been changed so we can't go in and sit to read newspapers and magazines. We now go to an outside window to check books out. The Law library only takes (5) persons at a time inside for computer use, on every other computer. (Still not (6)ft apart.) The Chow hall now requires every other seating too - but still not (6)ft apart. And what about the Weight room? Oh that's still operated the same as always - close proximity, sweating, hard breathing, etc (but that's not a virus transmitting environment, is it??). And we are always in waiting lines - for everything - and not even hardly (3)ft apart! (Impossible)

So sometime, somewhere, somehow, someone decided

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that no longer would single man housing be used in lower security levels - most of the cells were converted (by adding bunk beds) to (2) men cells. And then it became (at least in Michigan) 'alright' to have cube and dorm housing. "Temporary" pole barns were built, 20-30 yrs ago, and are still in use today.

But how is it not cruel and unusual, especially during this crisis, to be housed so as not to be able to have the CDC specified space of separation to resist transmission of this potentially deadly virus? And how is it not deliberate indifference on the States part? If we can't ~~afford to do so~~ safely and properly house prisoners - because we can't afford to do so - why do we?

Since it's known that sentence length is not a deterrent to crime - why do we, in this state - just keep making more laws and giving long sentences that can't be sustained? Wouldn't it be more sensible to be actually "correcting" instead of just "housing" prisoners?

As we are now seeing, our nation ~~nation~~ needs its people to be resources. We can't just keep depending on other nations for our needs and educated people. There are those in prison with potential to, also, be educated "resources". But do we "invest" in them? (Wouldn't want to do any correcting.) No, we put them in prison and promote the very behaviors that we punish for. No "correcting" is going on! We are a very stupid, lazy, vindictive people - it would seem. Will this Corona

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Virus wake us up?!

What we really need is to educate all our people better (not those of some other nation). The desire to be educated needs to be instilled in young and old, ~~at the~~ free and imprisoned, alike.

Prison populations need to be reduced to give the space needed to keep from spreading disease - this ~~last~~ isn't the last pandemic that we will see.

So stop putting "bandaids" on problems and "invest" in real "cures." Educate (correct) so there is no need to overcrowd prisons - meaning ample space for distancing. Then there will be no "cruel and unusual, deliberate indifference" to worry about. And maybe all of us can feel safer.