

## "Friends In Prison"

by Change Some Laws

When I mentioned "some friends of mine" in <sup>an</sup> email to my sister, she warned me to not trust anyone in prison. It may be true that there are some inmates who are committed to lives of crime, but humans are social beings, and if I hadn't found a few fellow inmates to trust and socialize with, I'm sure that I would be much worse off than I now am.

If you are intent upon living a law-abiding life and contributing good things to society, then naturally, you'll want to look for people who seem to share the same goal.

It's unfortunate that the Department of Justice won't let people on supervised release ~~be~~ stay in touch with others who reinforced their "best self" during their incarceration. (As a general rule, a felon is not allowed to be in touch with another felon. But not all crimes are conspiracies; many people act alone in committing an offense. Communicating with another felon is not as risky for some offenders as it is for others.)

During a difficult time, like re-entering society, it would help a person enormously to receive moral support and encouragement from a friend; it seems like inhumane treatment to

automatically cut people off from others with whom they already have a relationship.

Maybe there are many ~~to~~ people on supervised release who have been authorized by their probation officers to associate with felons, but based on what I've seen from prison staff and officials, I wouldn't bet on that.

Maybe it would be expecting too much of probation officers to <sup>have them</sup> choose acceptable associates for supervisees, but I still feel that the automatic prohibition ~~of~~ <sup>against</sup> continuing healthy friendships is a destructive policy. There has to be a better way.