

What Are We Really Correcting?

Sept. 1, 2022

This system we've found ourselves involuntarily apart of is called the Michigan Department of Corrections. An apt name for a place that looks to do what it suggests. But what does this system correct? The definition of correct, taken from Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, is to make right: chastise and used as an adjective; true ~~of~~ factual; conforming to a standard. From the standpoint of one who was arrested for a crime, that he committed without a full understanding of the consequences that would come as a result, I would surmise that the name does indeed fit. Though not for the reasons we may primarily think. This system called the Department of Corrections was never meant to correct the behavior of the inmates that make up its population. It was put in place to correct the American population in its entirety. There are ~~approx~~^{roughly}, more than 100,000 inmates housed within twenty nine prisons located in this State alone. Of them 85,000 are expected to recidivate after their release. In the day to day operations within these prisons, inmates are expected to maintain the order established by the officers and staff. Of the many rules we must obey one of them is that inmates must remain six months ticket free in order to qualify for many leisure/activity programs offered by each facility. For me, as well as many others, programs such as the weight pit, hobby craft, Church services, Alcoholics Anonymous, and visiting the library function to keep us out of trouble. With the current rules in effect it's almost as if the Department is saying we must stay out of trouble in order to qualify for programs that will keep us out of trouble. Rehabilitative? Not quite. Corrective? Perhaps. There's an old saying that goes, "once burned, twice shy." Yet there are many of us who feel that survival, in these conditions, comes before our desires to stay ticket free. There are many individuals I've talked to, who wouldn't hesitate to do something that would bring them to

segregation with a Class 1 misconduct in order to "send a message" to others incarcerated along with them. This behavior is not tolerated by the corrections officers and staff of course and often earns individuals more time added to their sentences. Yet they'll risk that outcome time and time again. For what? To make others fear them and think to leave him alone? Or is it due to the individual crying out for help that he isn't getting otherwise? The officers at my current facility are over worked and under staffed. So it goes without saying that they may seemingly ~~ignore~~ ignore those that require non-emergency assistance. It doesn't at all mean that they don't care. It does however add to the "corrections" aspect of the Department. For it's yet another problem that needs to be rectified by the State government. However just as the officers have to ignore certain matters to attend to more pressing concerns so does the taxpayers' money. Prisons and their conditions therewith are low down in the priority list as far as the State's budget is concerned. The reason for this is simple: the people within these institutions are right where the State needs them to be. Prison in and of itself is a Multi-billion dollar a year industry. The populations of the prisons are under strict guidelines and every measure is exhausted to maintain security. It doesn't take much to fund a single prison facility roughly half a billion per year. The returns (when you factor in money paid toward commissary, health care, and restitutions) are double or even triple that. Why doesn't some of that money come back toward getting people out of prisons where they can rejoin the community and better stimulate the economy? Why put a leash on a goldfish? The State legislature has recently held conversations about re-implementing good time in Michigan. Good time and disciplinary credits would help those with release dates to go home earlier and those without a chance to parole. Yet one is left to wonder what the trade-off would be? Whatever the legislative branch decides in application

of the clause one thing will remain clear. That the Department of Corrections isn't an entity that corrects behavior. It is an entity that corrects the American society as a whole. Every nation has to have a low class of citizens. Who better to populate the low class than prisoners and ex-convicts?

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