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Social Responsibility of DOC in relation to community development, family, and cultural identification

Death - the ultimate price. Prison - born of necessity. Survival of the fittest - or is it? Florida Department of Corrections was established in 1868 to accommodate those who would perpetrate crimes against society and humanity. Confinement was its only objective. Inmates needs were basic. A place to sleep, bathroom facilities, maybe bathing would be available. Life was simple at its inception. Humans have had wants and desires since consciousness ~~the~~ elevated to self awareness. But these wants and desires, most of the time went unanswered. Hence, the introduction of criminality.

To eliminate ones freedom is though to be punishment enough. This was not to be in the eyes of prison staff. All wanted to deliver their own brand of pain, and pain it was to be. By-laws of DOC have shifted from care, custody, and control to one of survival. Prison staff has to deal with younger, more violent, and disrespectful persons as a whole. To their mind everyone in prison is guilty and deserves no conditions of human existence.

The basic premise was us against them. This has lead to a recidivism rate of nearly 65% in the state of Florida with a national average of 47%.

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Eventually, society, families, and the powers to be recognized that incarcerated persons were more angry when released than when they first came to be in prison. Inmates could not adjust to this new environment or support themselves let alone their families.

People returning to society had no vocational skills, social skills, and could not form a plan as to how to live emotionally among their peers.¹ However, I must acknowledge the evolving challenges that face the prison industrial complex. They, from the top down, DOC, haven't had a successful model to base their ideologies upon except to warehouse those who were sentenced to serve prison time. There were no manuals to instruct administration and staff how to deal with cultural differences, social inadequacy, and the many educational barriers that were thrust upon their moral constitutions. Without proper training to deal with the sheer volume of bodies in the prison system, staff had to rely on their own instincts to survive. That led to "herd" everyone into one category of person for control of the masses.

¹ Nancy Cantor and John Kihlstrom, psychologist at Stanford University built upon the research work of Edward Thorndike in the 1920's regarding "social intelligence" - the ability to accumulate knowledge about the social world, understand people, and act wisely in social relations.

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DOL policy and procedures were designed to accomplish this with the least possible care given. What started out as punishment for a crime has evolved into a thriving financial incentive for the free world.

When the prison system began to expand, infrastructure was reserved to the basic construction of livable conditions. Consideration of education or vocational training was not a priority on anyone's list. The idea of our justice system was to convict the guilty, serve their time and return them to their place in society. In time the justice system became a new species of animal. Remove the thorns from society for as long as possible. This is being accomplished with a wide latitude of discretionary powers to judges and a fine alteration to the way the criminal punishment statutes are written. For example. The English language recognizes the word "may" as meaning - expressing possibility. The word "shall" as meaning - expressing intention or order. The American courts define the word "may", in the broad context as meaning shall. This is unprecedented, the "broad context" as abuse of discretion. Forming an opinion of their own that would allow for interpretation of any and all imagination.

Sociology is the science of evolution of human interrelations. It is the interdependence in function on the mental side, the contact and overlapping of our inner selves which make possible that form of collective life we call society.

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For any society to be successful, its people must be productive in vocation and emotional intelligence. Even morality, from a sociological standpoint forms conduct which are conducive to social harmony, social efficiency and survival of the group or community. When people are released back into society with no skill sets or emotional intelligence, society begins to implode.

Many prisoners were exposed to destructive strategies starting early in life, negative talk, screaming, blaming, and so on. Those responses required little cognitive control but are often effective at getting rid of negative feelings and providing temporary gratification. They fail to take in long term consequences and derail us from achieving our goals. Mass incarceration has failed to address crime statistics and has added to the downfall of society, families, and most of all opportunities for those who have served their time for their crime.

DOC, in time, has evolved to a point where they recognize the need for change in prison ideology. No longer can they ignore the public's out-cry of reform. This must begin the day a person is sentenced with evaluation and assignment of educational and/or vocational training before they go to their permanent camp.

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Technology is advancing so rapidly that Rand Corporation doesn't hire workers solely on skills alone. But we are looking for people who are flexible, present new ideas, inspire cooperation in groups, manage and lead teams, and demonstrate social and emotional intelligence.¹

DOC, society, and those who pay their way into political influence must now care about people who are being released with no skill sets of any kind. We as a society must change the way we think about prisons and adopt a more fundamental knowledge of what is needed to keep our communities morally, ethically, emotionally, and financially strong. Theodore Roosevelt once said "No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care". And care we must. And this brings me to the topic of once a person is released, what happens to that person, socially and emotionally.

¹ Mary Helen Immordine-Yang, neuroscientist at the University of Southern California conducted research of the self-evident principles of learning. We learn what we care about. She focused on 3 main aspects of learning.

① Attention, ② focus, ③ memory, all controlled by our emotions.

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When a person is released, he or she has 48 hrs. to report to the court house and register with officials that you are here in their community. Most ex-felons have conditions placed upon them that restricts their movement, use of computer, curfew restrictions, and some must report to probation officers for drug testing, classes of some kind, and many other restrictions I am not aware of. Also, the courts have adopted a new restriction to include ankle monitoring. All at the ~~expense~~ expense of the releasee. Without a doubt the releasee is facing odds that are against them that would, almost, guarantee their return to prison. Let's evaluate this scenario.

Upon their return to what they regard as home, their reality sets in. Find a job. They may only have temporary housing and need to find a permanent place to live. How am I going to find a job that would make enough money to pay all these costs associated with my incarceration and survive this economy. ex:

- ① restitution
- ② court ordered classes
- ③ drug testing
- ④ probation costs
- ⑤ rent
- ⑥ food
- ⑦ transportation
- ⑧ ankle monitor
- ⑨ any so many others!.

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But most important is finding an employer who is willing to work with them as far as leaving for check-in with probation, classes, and even having job site visits from their probation officer.

There are many assistance programs through Social Security that offer a wide range concerning your classification as a "depressed minority" according to the medical and psychological profession. But these are very difficult to obtain and are only temporary.

With all the restrictions and conditions placed upon the releasee, which, by the way is only a financial incentive for private company's profits through lobbying by individuals that profit themselves, some of those could be the decision makers themselves. Otherwise, DOC assumes NO responsibility to the outcome of the assimilation of the ex-felon back into family and society as a whole. In my opinion, the releasee is STILL in prison with all these conditions and restrictions. NO!, it does not deter criminal activity.

There is no other alternative for DOC but to assume responsibility for the states social health and well being by financial assistance to the ex-felon for DOC's role in avoiding prison reform that would give credit for time served, remove conditions and restrictions and expunge their record after 5 yrs. of successful and clean living.

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Abuse of power by probation officers is rampant throughout our culture and serves no useful purpose except to create more prison time for the ex-felon in the free world. If a person wants to succeed they will. If a person is a career criminal, there is NOTHING going to deter that individual from criminal activity, except their death! And that is what the outcome has to be!

Scientifically speaking, society is defined as a reciprocal relation between individuals. DOC and the ex-felon must develop that reciprocal relationship for our country to survive, not just survive, but to restore the social, moral, ethical, and financial strength we once were.