

"What About Us"

By [REDACTED]

Recently, I sat and watched a televised debate between several candidates running for an elected office. A familiar question was asked: What would you do to address the growing crime rate? Well, as they offered the same cookie-cutter solutions such as "put more police on the streets" and "make those responsible do more time", none of those who spoke came up with a logical solution to an age old problem. You see, the issue is one that has to be addressed from the inside out. What I mean is that the solution is available when we look at the reasons many of the crimes are committed to begin with.

Lack of education, lack of usable skills, and residual apathy plays a significant role in a lot of people end up in prison. A lot of the men I talk to here in prison sincerely want a decent chance at doing better for themselves and their families, but often resort to hustling as a means of support. Selling drugs, stealing, and taking other alternate routes as a means of supporting their lifestyles, they see this as a viable way to put food on the table, and stay relevant in a society that encourages attention, image, and fame. Don't get me wrong, there are some who are simply determined to do wrong no matter what is going on, but I truly believe that when all is said and done, even those who are hard-core would choose to remain free as opposed to serving time in here. This brings us to the favorite term many politicians like to use.... Recidivism.

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There are numerous studies that give an estimate of how many people will end up back in prison after their release, and so many men as well as women are branded for life as "habitual criminals" Why not start inside of the prisons in search for the answers? Plenty of us in here will eagerly tell you that we lack the available and necessary opportunities and support once we are released, and so society expects us to merge back into it without the tools we need to make it on the outside.

In here, we need more training, more resources, more encouragment, and more understanding from those who simply want to lock us all away and forget that we are someone's brother, father, uncle or husband. Lets find a way to divert some of the punitive energy into rebuilding lives. We are in a system that swallows up human beings, and spits out hopeless, helpless individuals.

Many agencies call themselves Department of Corrections, well, where is the true correction?

What about us?