

WHAT, ME WORRY?

ACCOUNTABILITY AT MCI NORFOLK

Timothy J. Muise

Does anyone remember Alfred E. Neuman of Mad Magazine fame? His motto was: "What me worry?", and I believe it was reflective of his indifference to consequence or social parameter. I can't help but apply this logic to the problem here at MCI Norfolk. Now I say problem, singular, and not problems, as I believe all the ills here behind the gray revolve around one underlying failure. That failure is the lack of staff accountability for adverse actions. Years of getting away with policy violations, human rights violations, drug smuggling, contraband introduction, sexual dalliances and a whole host of other illicit acts has bred an attitude that they can get away with anything. Total "anything goes" anarchy is behind all the small brush fire problems, as well as the large infernos that burn daily inside the wall of infamy.

When a guard, who is Napoleonesque in stature screams at a larger convict for stepping out of line in the medication call, it is indicative of a "no fear" attitude. When a Sergeant allows men to engage in sexual encounters in his units in return for a bit of information about other convicts it shows just to what depth the staff will stoop just to appear to be in the know. Rehabilitation is out the window when the upper echelon of law enforcement here at Norfolk refers to prisoners as "rats", "skinners", and "rapists" in his casual conversation. Professionalism is as rare as a Texas democrat. Young kids are shown that the "government" is far more corrupt than the convicts. No clue administrators ask their underlings how the place operates because they rule from a sort of ivory tower. You cannot believe how this wounded gull soars through the dark sky portraying an effort toward public safety. Rodney Dangerfield would not believe the joke that is the DOC. The system, like Rodney, wonders why it gets no respect.

Guards try to make a case that they walk the toughest beat in the state while they snore away in the housing units here at Norfolk. Sound asleep, drool running down their chin, and looking for more money to boot. The staff access hour looks more like the midway at the carnival with wide brim hats, pink umbrellas and get-ups of all sorts, all worn by 100 Grand plus staff. Your tax dollars at work buy these make your own clown outfits. Sequestered behind the prison wall these veteran's of correctional failure make decisions that ensure the robbery of convenience stores. They treat men in a manner that seals the deal for bank robbery. But what should be most alarming is that they set out on a course of purposeful shaming and degradation which ends up in the morgue as the body of

a murder victim. They treat men with disdain simply because they can. There are no consequences to them personally here at Norfolk. The consequences are visited upon the unsuspecting public, maybe in that convenience store, maybe in a dark alley, but most likely as an abused wife, neglected child, random gang violence victim or drug overdose. Never are the consequences placed on the shoulders of those who truly need to bare them.

The Commissioner of Correction, Harold Clarke, recently released a five-year plan for the department of correction. It is the same old regurgitated rhetoric that they have spun before so many times, successful reentry, the golden rule, the best trained professionals, blah, blah, blah. Makes me want to puke! The fact is that you can NEVER bring change when you keep the same old disgruntled and draconian employees who have failed this system for decades. These leopards will not change their spots. Clarke cannot be fool enough to think they will. This is just his media blitz to justify his high paying job while protecting the goose that lays the golden eggs for so many DOC layabouts. Again my urge to vomit.

The time for accountability has come. We must publicize the serious nature of the failings and how they place the general public in extreme jeopardy each and evryday. Examples must be made of the worst of the worst. Termination! See you later and don't let the door hit in your DOC cushion! Then an edict is to be layed down from lawmakers and public policy enforcers. "The top echelon is going to change and we are bringing in new blood." Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, right down to the superintendents of each institution must go. Let them all sort papers in some DOC office (they have such an adundance) and any that are not with the program get shown that same ass whacking door. The second phase of the edict will be to enforce the duty to rehabilitate that the citizens of the commonwealth compelled lawmakers to put down on parchment. It is the only way to protect the public safety, reduce crime rates, decrease domestic abuse, honor the children and move the cause of humanity ahead.

Dostoevsky said, "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." The time has come to advance the degree of civilization here in Massachusetts by holding corrupt and ineffective prison officials accountable.



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