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I am a thirty-six year old man who has spent the last nine years of my life imprisoned for the possession with the intent to distribute five grams or more of cocaine base "Crack" and a quantity of MDMA "ecstasy". My reason for posting, is to give voice to the tens of thousands of federal drug offenders serving mandatory minimum sentences. We are not monsters, predators, or irredeemable. We are men: fathers, husbands, uncles, brothers, and sons. Whom for the most part, are suffering through the consequence of decisions made in youth, ignorance, and addiction.

I look forward to questions, and welcome conversation about my life, this environment, and the future.

My goal is to enjoin the world to "Observe" that growth is possible, redemption is achievable, and that second chances do matter. Some years ago, I realized that at heart, I'm idealist. I promised I would not allow prison to consume or define me. Asking myself how could I overcome the mess I had made of my life? The answer came in the form of Central Texas College's "Computer Training Program". After earning certifications in this program, and Lakewood College's "Certified Mediators Program,"

I was accepted into Ohio University's "College Program for the Incarcerated". Where at the time of this post, I am completing a semester of courses. At this point, I've earned 53.5 quarter hours toward my associate's degree, "Social Sciences Emphasis". I need 96 quarter hours to graduate. My current G.P.A. is 3.8, as I enjoy the work along with the exposure to new ideas and perspectives.

Family and a friend have covered the tuition thus far, but, this recession has calcified, there are no grants or student loans available to prisoners, and my educational pursuits have begun to give way to other priorities of those in free society. Some hope of funding did lay in "The Prison Scholar Fund" a nonprofit that awarded scholarships to incarcerated students maintaining a 3.5 or better G.P.A. Unfortunately, a recent letter informed me that the "PSF" has been unable to raise monies that are the lifeblood of their nonprofit work". I look forward to more positive news in the future, ever optimistic, I know that things can only get so bad before they start to improve.

As most people are eventually released, education becomes more important. Not only is it true that once released, former prisoners are better able to reintegrate

into society, while finding and maintaining employment. It is also true that the higher one's level of education, the more profound and conscious one becomes of their actions and their community.

During my time in prison, I see for myself, year by year that those who just "do time" are the people who reoffend within two or three years. While those who learn a trade or earn a degree, go on to lead more stable and productive lives. I understand and respect the sentiment that prisoners are in prison to be punished, truth is though, this country punishes itself with ineffectually high budget busting incarceration rates. That only serve to return the uneducated to lives of crime, poverty, and disfunction, as criminal records compound the plight of the unskilled upon release.

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