

## Entry # 5 : Punishment vs. Rehabilitation.

The comments left on my second entry have given me the idea for what to write here. First of all thank you for reading my blog and taking the time to leave your comments.

The debate about punishment vs. Rehabilitation isn't new. Just the other week CBS Evening News had a segment about the % rates of recidivism in individual states and the effect of rehabilitative programs to these rates. The national average of recidivism is somewhere near 40%. Personally I thought it would be higher. I can count myself amongst that % because this is my second time here in prison for a separate charge than the first time. I don't know if these % rates include parole violators or if it only includes people who come back for new crimes. Parole violations are usually only "technical violations", such as ; Failure to report; duty OA's; failure to pay your fees etc etc. Not necessarily crimes in themselves but against the parole stipulations. My GUESS is that parole violations are counted in the recidivism rates.

Now the question is this : IS IT THE STATES JOB TO PUNISH THE INMATE FOR THE CRIME COMMITTED, OR TO REHABILITATE THEM?

See, cause I think what its' a 2 part question here. what society THINKS the persons should do, and what the state actually DOES.

I can't speak on the other states or Federal prisons, I can only tell you what the state of Texas does and doesn't do. The motto "DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS" was invented in the 1980's as a way to combat the litter problem on the Texas Highways. But has since become the battle cry for

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being "Tough On Crime". And believe me they ARE. It seems that the goal has become "Lock 'em up and throw away the key" rather than attempting to make us more productive citizens. And I think this is the crux of the debate. Is it the states responsibility to punish or educate? To be the dispenser of justice or to be the deliverer of social salvation?

The reality is that rehabilitation isn't free. These programs cost money. We're talking about some that they already have and some that are no longer in play. As it stands there are a handful of rehabilitative programs available to Texas inmates. Those being ones like "Cognitive Intervention"; Religious services such as "KAIROS"; and the G.E.D program. There are other educational programs available but the inmate must pay for those. You can take college or vocational trades but must be paid for by the inmate or their family. And most of us can't afford them.

Some of you may remember that back in the 80's Pell Grants used to be available to inmates to pay for college. Inmates were getting degrees for free thanks to the tax payer and availability of these grants. But what happened? The tax payer started complaining that his and her taxpayer dollars were being "wasted" to educate inmates. Complaints were made to Congress and finally Congress cut that short and said "No More Pell Grants for Inmates".

A lot of you think the goal should be to Rehabilitate, but just as many or more think its to punish and not at a cost to taxpayer money. But how ELSE can it be funded? How are the State & Federal governments funded? Tax money. Right now that there seems to be all these major budget cuts even here in the state of Texas, rehabilitation programs are

3.) looking less and less likely - they are at a point where our food is needing to be cut back to save money. I guess stop is expensive to produce. ☺

I agree that the goal should be to make the inmate a productive citizen. This is the most beneficial outcome that both the state and society could hope for. The state benefits from having another taxpayer lining its coffers and society has one less worry. But remember these things cost money. And if the majority of the taxpayers complain and say "Hey! We don't want our tax dollars used to give them scumbags college degrees!" what can be done? Can you even blame those people for saying that? The argument is that an educated felon is only a more dangerous one. You see? I mean images of Bernie Madoff come to mind and that scares people.

But look here, THIS IS THE BOTTOM LINE. Rehabilitation is an individual choice. If you yourself don't want to be rehabilitated, if you aren't trying to hear what anyone is saying and don't even care then it doesn't matter what the state offers or doesn't offer. I can tell you that I myself made a conscious effort to change my mentality to one of productivity and advancement rather than one of destruction and detriment. But that's the way it HAS to be. Regardless, if I wasn't offered the tools here I made my own tools. I took the time to study. I completed my High School Diploma after 15 yrs of dropping out of High School. I completed a Business Management course with Honors, I took all the courses I could in Integrity and Substance Abuse that I could find. The schooling cost money. lucky for me

I have a supportive family who paid for these things. But the decision to TRY and make the necessary effort had to come from ME, first and foremost. It mattered less what the state had to offer than what I myself could do to

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self-educate and reframe my own mentality. You can be offered all the choices in the world, but if you're uninterested or unfocused it makes little difference. If you want to win you'll find a way to win. If you want to be a success you'll MAKE yourself one. I believe in the saying that says "the Greatest Emperors crown themselves." You have to take the initiative. You have to WANT it. I think when we the inmates and the poor in general realize this the problem will solve itself. Now whether or not that'll ever happen, well that's a whole other topic of debate. )