

Due to the nature...

by: Maisha Mahalia

I have ran across this phrase many times during my incarceration... "Due to the nature of the crime you are denied parole." Does the judicial system realize that the nature of the crime will not change? However the nature of the person may have changed.

While the nature of the crime is important, there's nothing that can be done or said to change the event. What can be changed is a person's mindset and way of thinking, as well as their behavior pattern. These factors are not taken into consideration.

Inmates are reviewed for parole by a panel that gets information from a file, generated by people who get information from yet another file. None of the people who read these files know the personality or characteristics of the person they are reading about. They base their conclusion on opinions and theories formulated by others, who can't possibly know the nature of a person, who they have only talked to for thirty minutes to an hour, or in some cases not at all.

The circumstances behind the crime is never evaluated. It's just assumed that the person is criminal minded. Never mind that it's their first time in trouble. Over look the fact that the person was a productive citizen, going to school and working. Ignore the black eyes, police reports and hospital records. You don't take into consideration maybe something happened to cause the person to act the way they did. There are a lot of factors that are not in a file, so they are not

Considered.

- What is vital and should be evaluated are these factors.
- Has the person realized the impact of their actions?
  - Has the person sought help with dealing with their actions? (Therapy, groups)
  - Has the person done anything to better themselves? (Trade, Programs, Education)
  - Has the person participated in constructive and positive activities beneficial to rehabilitation?
  - Has there been a change in behavior? (Positive or negative) why?
  - Have the person learned to resolve issues in a positive manner?

Many of these things can't be learned from a file. You would have to ask those who have been around them to get an accurate answer to these questions. The file does not reflect the growth or change, it merely states they completed a group. The people who can give a feel for the person's growth and change are the detail officer, the teacher, the dorm officer. They are around the person on a regular basis. A counselor who only meets with them every three months for thirty minutes to an hour cannot give an accurate feel for the person. Some counselors don't even see you that long. They only ask is your address correct, check the phone number, tell you what you are mandated for, and when you ask questions they never know. A counselor can make an unfavorable review just because someone wrote over their head to handle an issue they were to handle. They could be having personal problems and take it out on an inmate. Oh it happens, a lot. You'd be amazed at the unprofessionalism that goes on in a prison. So how do you know what's in the file is accurate and true?

When the judicial system stops looking at the nature of the crime, and starts evaluating the nature of the person, justice can begin to be served.

An example of how the nature of a person can change, is told in the Bible. Saul, who prosecuted and destroyed Christians, who in the end was their most devoted leader.