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# Why Rehabilitation Ain't Happening

by Nate A. Lindell.  
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This isn't a fair question, but this series of posts will try to answer it anyway.

Consider the factors in the problem.

X = prisoners, most of whom were never entirely rehabilitated in the first place, some of whom "chose" (see post # "Do We Really Have a Choice?" for clarification of this term) to be dehabilitated;

Y = prisoncrats, many of whom are themselves not rehabilitated, yet are given some basic training on herding people, christened "Correctional Officer," then thrown in the pen with X and vaguely told to "do your job;"

Z = a nationwide high recidivism rate.

Is it that prisoners are incorrigible scum who just don't want to be fixed/habilitated, live crime free? Or is it that the system isn't allowing prisoners to be healthy, decent human beings? In some cases — e.g. Pablo Escobar & Ted Bundy — it's fair to conclude that prisoners have no inclination, maybe no ability to live crime free, in which case incarceration of some sort (to protect other people) is justifiable. But in other cases (I dare to include mine), the system seems intent on thwarting, by any means, a prisoner's productive development into a full, reasonable, considerate human being — i.e. rehabilitation.

If this seems absurd to you, I contend that you are ignorant of the absurdity of real prisons and what at least some prisoners are like. You may cure this unawareness by reviewing personal stories from prisoners across the country at <http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/>. Please disregard the Hollywood crap and even the brief, superficial sketches on newsshows, which can only distort the reality. At least some prisoners are drug-free, morally conscious, and seek to rise above their cursed fates, yet are thwarted, even punished for such attempts. Insanely it is only such prisoners who suffer from imprisonment, not true sociopaths.

Do you scoff?

You like yourself, right? Given that you're alive, the answer is "yes,"

at least somewhat. Otherwise the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" would wound you so painfully that you'd cease the struggle to live. Every living being must have some self-esteem.

But what if one's self-esteem is wholly or mostly based on the belief that somebody else is bad, evil, not as human as them? A person with such a specious self-esteem becomes dependent on the bad people that enable him to perceive himself as good.

What happens if the bad person tries to improve herself, tries to become good? The person who already deems themselves to be good (based on the badness or bad-erness of another) has a critical need to keep the other person bad, debilitated.

"We all have, and need, opponents...", said Anthony Storr in Human Aggression (p.104). As Storr explained in pp. 63-64 (of the softcover Bantam edition), we become very dependent on our enemies, the "ugly people" inferred by Marilyn Manson's song. This is why it's a struggle for any person in prison (who doesn't collaborate with prisoncrats) to get on and stay on a productive course of self-development, i.e. habilitation or rehabilitation.

Of course whole towns, such as Waupun, Wisconsin, become financially dependent on their prisons (as plantations did their slaves, pushers do their addicts, etc.), making it not just a psychological threat to prisoncrats but a financial and thus physical (money is needed to eat, etc.) threat to prisoncrats to have much success at habilitating their captives. Every monster they can make or maintain justifies their jobs and the jobs of their offspring.

In his "Is Prison Increasing Crime?", 2008 Wis. L. Rev. 1049, Whittier Law School Professor Martin H. Pritikin thoroughly details how prisons do increase crime. But I've not yet read anything revealing the psychological motive discussed herein. I hope for comments and criticisms by criminologists, psychologists and those involved in the legal system, so we might discover the validity of this theory and, hopefully, minimize the debilitation and stagnation it's responsible for.

Sincerely,

Prometheus

\* Readers, please share this piece with anyone you think might be interested in it.