

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY. I WAS ASKED "WHAT DO TV AND MOVIES GET RIGHT AND WHAT DO THEY GET WRONG ABOUT PRISONS? AND WHAT WOULD SURPRISE ME ABOUT THE SYSTEM FROM THE INSIDE?" WELL I HAVE SEEN A LOT OF PRISON TV SHOWS AND MOVIES AND AFTER HAVING DONE OVER 20 TOTAL YEARS IN PRISON, I CAN QUALIFY MYSELF AS AN EXPERT. I AM IN NO WAY PROUD OF THIS BUT IT'S A FACT. I ALSO POSED THIS QUESTION TO A FEW GUYS THAT HAVE BEEN IN PRISON 40-50 YEARS. YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT TV & MOVIES NEED TO SELL THIS PROGRAM TO A VIEWER SO THEY MAKE IT AS "FORBIDDEN" AS POSSIBLE. THE SHOWS AND MOVIES USUALLY INCLUDE VIOLENT BLOODY MURDERS WITHIN THE PRISON WALLS, RAPES IN A SHOWER AREA, CONSTANT FIGHTING AND RIOTS. THESE THINGS DO HAPPEN, BUT RARELY. HERE IN MY HOME STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA, WE DO HAVE RAPES, ONCE IN A BLUE MOON THERE WILL BE A FIGHT AND SOMEONE GETS KILLED. BUT FOR THE MOST PART, THIS IS A COMMUNITY. SOMEWHAT DIVIDED BUT STILL A COMMUNITY. RACISM DIVIDES US IN HERE. NOT ALL OF US ARE THE SAME. EVERYONE HAS SEEN THE TV SHOW CALLED "PRISON BREAK". BASED IN A PRISON IN THE ILLINOIS AREA. BUT IN THE SHOW, PEOPLE WERE BEING RAPED, KILLED, TORTURED. DOES EVERYONE REMEMBER THE SHOW ON HBO CALLED "OZ", ANOTHER ELABORATE SHOW FILLED WITH RAPES, MURDER, BLOODY GORE IN ORDER TO DRAW THE VIEWER IN. SOCIETY CLAIMS TO HATE PEOPLE LIKE THIS BUT THESE SHOWS AND MOVIES GET RATINGS THROUGH THE ROOF. IN PENNSYLVANIA STATE PRISONS, WE ARE LOCKED IN OUR CELLS 19 HOURS PER DAY, UNLESS YOU WORK. THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH JOBS FOR EVERYONE SO HALF THE PRISON IS LOCKED IN DURING THE DAY EXCEPT FOR OUTSIDE YARD, SPORTS, CARDS, WORKING OUT ARE THE 3 MAIN THINGS DONE. PRISON IS A HORRIBLE AND BORING PLACE. BUT FOR THE MOST PART, WE WORK TOGETHER IN ORDER TO MAKE ACHIEVEMENTS AND DO BETTER. TV & MOVIES HAVE HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD BUT THEY OVER EMBELLISH IN ORDER TO MAKE MONEY. MORE VIEWERS OR MORE SALES EQUAL MORE MONEY. AND THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. AS FOR THE 2nd PART OF THE QUESTION, THIS IS THE ONE THAT I FIND INTERESTING. THE GENERAL PUBLIC WOULD BE SURPRISED ABOUT A LOT, BUT WHAT DO THEY CARE ABOUT? WHAT DOES THE GENERAL POPULATION CARE ABOUT KNOWING ABOUT US IN PRISON THAT'S TRUTH OR FICTION? PRISON IS NOT ABOUT REHABILITATION. IT IS SIMPLY ABOUT 1 THING. PROFIT. MAKING MONEY. THEY TOOK AWAY THE PELL GRANTS. THESE WERE FEDERAL GRANTS THAT ALLOWED PRISONERS TO GO TO SCHOOL, COLLEGE, AND BECOME SOMEONE. BETTER THEIR LIVES. YOU COULD EARN REAL COLLEGE DEGREES. BUT EDUCATION HAS STOPPED BEING IMPORTANT. CLASSES, PROGRAMS THAT CAN HELP A MAN OR WOMAN GROW AND LEARN SO THAT THEY DON'T COME BACK, THESE ARE BEING ELIMINATED. IT'S ALL ABOUT MONEY. BUT DESPITE THAT, THE PRISONERS WHO HAVE MONEY, THEY SHARE THEIR BOOKS, THEY SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE. THERE IS LESS VIOLENCE IN A PRISON THEN IN A CITY. IN HERE MEN HAVE MADE THE DECISION TO CHANGE. WE MAKE FRIENDS, WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER, WE WORK TOGETHER. YES, A LOT OF US DO FIND RELIGION BUT WHAT WOULD SURPRISE YOU IS THAT IT'S NOT JUST FOR THE PAROLE BOARD. I WILL DIE IN HERE. I WANT TO DO BETTER, I WANT TO BE BETTER, I WANT TO BE SOMEONE WHO CAN BE PROUD AND HOLD MY HEAD UP HIGH, SOMEONE

MY FAMILY CAN STILL BE PROUD OF. I WAS ONCE THE PRESIDENT OF THE JAYCEES, AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION, AND OUR CHAPTER DONATES THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS EACH YEAR TO WORTHY CHARITIES AND FOOD BANKS THAT HELP FEED THE POOR AND HOMELESS. THERE IS GOOD IN HERE. ALOT OF GOOD, BUT WE MADE BAD CHOICES AND DECISIONS THAT BROUGHT US HERE. NOT EVERY ONE IN PRISON IS SCUM, OR EVIL OR UNWORTHY OF A SECOND CHANCE. IT'S HUMAN NATURE TO WANT TO DO GOOD. AND THOUGH WE MADE BAD CHOICES, WE STILL WANT TO HELP AND DO GOOD. WE TRAIN DOGS IN HERE FOR BLIND PEOPLE, FOR INJURED MILITARY PERSONNEL. WE RAISE MONEY TO HELP LOCAL KIDS SOCCER TEAMS BUY EQUIPMENT. WE GET TREATED PRETTY BADLY BY ALOT OF GUARDS BUT WE HOLD OUR HEADS HIGH AND TRY TO DO BETTER. I HAVE MET SOME VERY GOOD GUARDS IN HERE. REAL GOOD HUMAN BEINGS. BUT I HAVE ALSO MET SOME WHO ARE WORKING HERE JUST SO THEY CAN HURT PEOPLE. DRUGS DESTROY. THERE ARE SO MAN MEN HERE BEHIND THE WALL WITH EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER. THE MAJORITY OF MEN IN HERE WERE ON DRUGS AND THIS IS WHEN THEY MADE THE BAD CHOICES. I WAS A KID. JUST 21 YEARS OLD WHEN I WAS SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON. THEY COME IN YOUNGER AND YOUNGER ALL THE TIME. THESE WERE ONCE GOOD AND DECENT HUMAN BEINGS WHO WERE KIDNAPPED BY ADDICTION. BUT WHEN YOU'RE HERE, YOU CHANGE. YOU'RE OFF THE DRUGS, YOU MAKE BETTER DECISIONS AND CHOICES, YOU STRIVE TO DO BETTER, BECOME A BETTER MAN. THESE ARE THE SAME MEN WHO ARE TRAINED IN HERE TO BE TEACHERS FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS WHICH WILL HELP PRISONERS LEARN TO READ. THEY ARE THE LEADERS OF OUR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES. THEY ARE THE SAME ONES WHO FACILITATE A PROGRAM ENTITLED "THE DAY OF RESPONSIBILITY" IN WHICH DOZENS OF COLLEGE KIDS AND TEACHERS AND OUTSIDE COMMUNITY PEOPLE COME INTO THE PRISON TO BE A PART OF. I COULD PROBABLY GO ON & ON BUT I WANT TO END WITH THIS, WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS JUST LIKE YOU AND ALL WE WANT IS FOR YOU, THE GENERAL PUBIC, TO ALLOW US TO EARN A SECOND CHANCE. ALMOST EVERYONE DESERVES A SECOND CHANCE BUT WHEN WE ARE ALL PRE-JUDGED AS ONE, YOU REMOVE THE INDIVIDUALISM AND WE ARE ALL TREATED THE SAME. THERE IS GOOD IN PRISON, IF MORE PEOPLE WOULD TAKE THE TIME TO KNOW US, OPINIONS AND MINDS WOULD BE CHANGED. AS WE HAVE CHANGED, YOUR MINDS WILL BE CHANGED. I AM A LIFER AND I HAVE GROWN AND CHANGED FOR THE BETTER. DESPITE THE FACT THAT I AM 36 AND I WILL ONE DAY DIE IN HERE, I CONTINUE TO DO BETTER AND I DESPERATELY ACHE FOR A SECOND CHANCE. WE ARE FATHERS, HUSBANDS, BROTHERS, UNCLES, WE ARE HUMAN AND WE ASK THAT WE NOT BE FORGOTTEN. IF ANYONE HAS ANY QUESTIONS FOR ME, YOU MAY SEND ME A MESSAGE THROUGH MY BLOG SITE AT: www.betweenthebars.org/blogs/1738/

I AM PRISON DAD, & LIKE THOUSANDS OF OTHER PRISONERS, I YEARN FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO EARN A SECOND CHANCE. HOPEFULLY THIS ISN'T THE LAST YOU HEAR FROM PRISON DAD. CIAO.