

April 16, 2016

"Perception management." A term that has firmly become the mainstay of prison and private prison managements lexicon; a term used to cover prison managements repeated failure at achieving their mission statement and the rehabilitation of offenders. Officials have mastered Hitler's propaqanda chief, Josep Gobbles motto: "Any lie, frequently repeated, will eventually gain acceptance," and "If you are going to tell a lie, tell a big one." Prison officials do just that.

Officials that utilize 'perception management' are not spin doctors because they don't spin fact. They **CREATE** facts and then sell them to an unsuspecting public as the truth, yet the evidence of their failure, the high recidivism rate, is blatantly before us.

As an incarcerated individual at the Sanders estes Unit in Texas, a unit operated by Management & Training Corporation under contract with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), I see the 'perception management' utilized by unit administration on a daily basis. Audits by the TDCJ, the American Correctional Association (ACA), and other entities know that what they are auditing is not in fact the truth or the realities of what transpires within the prison system but is nothing more than the art of perception management utilized by prison administration. Still, perception management covers facts and creates new ones that are untrue, and again, through this practice, our system fails the public at large, including the offenders whom they are paid to rehabilitate.

Is MTC really rehabilitating offenders, preparing them with the necessary skills to succeed outside of prison walls? If I were to be asked this question I would have to answer in the negative. NO. As a graduate of MTC's vocational program, Building Construction and/or Construction Technologies, and a NCCER accreditation, I honestly couldn't tell you the difference between a jack stud and a sill plate. Nor could I even remotely begin to

articulate what NCCER is or pass a test given by a nonbias proctor, yet i have earned a freshly minted NCCER card. We could say that this is my fault, and to some degree you would be right. I never asked to be enrolled in the classes, especially when I have no interest in building technology or whatever NCCER is. But being put in the classes and graduating with honors was never about me, rehabilitation, or ensuring skills for my success. It was about the money received by MTC to enroll and graduate me. Rehabilitation and truth be damn. "Perception management." Thats the key word. I have been rehabilitated with marketable job skills. Yeah, right.

But the failure reaches deeper within the criminal justice system. Since arriving here at this MTC run unit, I have been amazed at the access to drugs brought in by MTC prison employees. Drugs are readily available within this unit, more so than on the streets of America. K2 is the primary drug of choice brought in by MTC employees and sold to the offender population at a drastically marked up price. This has resulted in offenders having to be sent out to outside emergency rooms for treatment. An isolated incident? No. More like a weekly incident that plays out before the offender population. A simple records request would reveal much about this situation, or at least when offenders are taken by ambulance to an emergency room due to K2 and other narcotics. Events that don't require an outside hospital aren't reported, or are they? A simple records request.

Rehabilitation touted by MTC and the TDCJ? How do we begin to rehabilitate the offender population when prisoners have easy access to narcotics brought in by MTC officials in the name of subsidizing their meager income? How do we begin to rehabilitate the offender population through education when they don't earn the certificate of graduation for the class they have taken and have no knowledge of the subject matter therein? As I see it, there remains a persistent systematic abuse of the truth, of facts, and an institutionalization of dishonesty that has become the routine and part of the policy process of MTC and its employees. It would

be safe to say that this definitely contributes to the yearly failure of MTC's and TDCJ's mission statement.

Daniel Boorstin, a former Librarian of Congress once said, "We risk being the first people in history to have been able to make their illusions so vivid, so persuasive, so 'realistic' that they can live in them. We are the most illusioned people on earth." Another way of saying 'perception management.'

The reality is, all MTC and its administrative heads at the Sanders Estes Unit, including the TDCJ can do today, is defending what they have failed to do, and they do this the best through 'perception management.' The entire system with its rules, surveys, audits, policies, and reports have become geared, not for success, or even an attempt at achieving their mission statement of rehabilitating offenders and preparing them for life outside of prison walls, but instead, to identifying and managing their continuing rate of failure through perception management.

Shouldn't we hold wardens like Robert Treon and his administrative heads responsible for the job they are given, including keeping narcotics out of the prison, and honestly educating prisoners within their care? Instead, our wardens, assistant wardens and administrative heads strut around as kings in their castle failing prisoners and the public at large under the guise of rehabilitating the individuals in their care while being rewarded with paychecks, bonuses and higher positions within the for-profit prison.

Where else can you fail daily at your mission statement and still be rewarded, collecting a paycheck for that failure? Especially on the backs of the prison population and the public at large? Maybe, just maybe the warden and administration here at the MTC Sanders Estes Unit, and TDCJ officials should be held accountable for their failure, for the truth and even, maybe some results of their mission statement. But then again, I suppose one can still dream. Its all a matter of perception..

Stephen C. Walker
Between the Bars