

Dear Maggie,

Thank you for your thoughtful comments. I did not take them as disparaging. I'm glad you are compassionate enough to write to a prisoner; your compassion improves this world. I do not know the man you write to, but I do personally know many other long-term prisoners who have gone to college while in prison, run prisoner organizations, been leaders in literary discussion groups, and have lived full lives while in prison to the best of their ability. Most of these men did this without the help of the prison, and this independence from the "system" would make them fine citizens. The sad fact though is that their remaining in prison sprads a hopelessness to other men/women who ask, "Why should I do these pro-social things if I am just going to leave prison in a body bag?" It is that hopelessness that creates the record recidivism in Massachusetts. Men in the prison hospitals have to suffer abuse at the hands of guards who view them as dirty animals. Prison nurses are mentally beat down by these guards to the point where many of them treat the prisoner/patients as animals. It is a barbaric system. Freedom is the answer. The Europeans do it, the Scandinavians do it, but we thrive on abuse here. To answer your question; Yes, you are wrong. Prison is not all we know. We are much more than that and the answer to the "incarceration dilemma" is the compassion you have dispalyed. Thank you for your comments and please contact me directly at;

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