

Reply ID:
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Dear SilverZvezda,

April 16, 2017

Glad that you liked the satire. Honestly, I'm always a little leery about writing these "tongue-in-cheek" pieces because I'm never quite certain that it will be viewed for what it is.

As far as the issues currently plaguing our criminal justice system, where to start? I could sit here for weeks, months, even years trying to describe the problems I face on a daily basis, and I still wouldn't even come close to discussing everything. Not only that, no sane person could ever believe some of the more outrageous things I'd describe, not that I'd blame them.

Some of the things I see taking place in here can only be described as "sadistic," such as officers who like beating up on inmates at every opportunity. Other things fall into the realm of corruption, such as when officers openly steal your belongings right in front of you, although I think "robbery" is probably a more accurate term, considering the fact that they're openly using their power and authority when stealing. In addition to sadism and corruption, there's the "twisted" officers, the guys who spend hours combing through the files of their inmate captives, hoping to find something they can blackmail them with, and when they find what they're looking for, well, let's just say that, depending upon what the officer found, the sky's the limit. I've seen inmates forced to do everything, from trying to kill another inmate to raping an inmate, from running drugs for the officer to keeping quiet when the officer rapes the inmate. Finally, you've got officers who take the concept of "petty" to a whole new level. More often than not, these are the guys (and girls) who never had any real power or authority as a child, so they don't know how to handle the taste they've been given, especially when they're backed up by corrupt officers who are going to back their play, no matter how idiotic it is.

In prison, you see all sorts of things, the most evil and despicable of which come from the officers put here to watch over and protect us, but without exception, the single worst incident is when the system put into place to address any and all of these issues is operated by people every bit as corrupt as the people incarcerated, or worse, the officers watching over them. Time and time again I've filed an appeal, or tried to, attempting to bring a problem to the light of day, only to find it rejected for some of the most insane reasons imaginable, and on those rare occasions in which the appeal was accepted, nothing was ever done. The officer is free to lie, cheat, steal, beat and rape his way through the prison system, while the person who had the nerve to try to address these issues is threatened and subjected to continuous harassment. It's no wonder why so many people are more screwed up when they leave here than they ever were when they arrived.

To say that the criminal justice system is "shitty" or "malformed" doesn't even begin to describe what's going on in here. Things are beyond broken, and they only continue to get worse with each passing day. Every now and then, some well intentioned person makes an attempt to propose some sort of fix, but more often than not, their proposals usually end up causing more harm than good, usually because, by the time their solution is actually implemented, it doesn't even resemble the solution initially proposed. For instance, did you know that the new PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) punishes the alleged victim for speaking up? Seriously, if you come forward with allegations of being sexually assaulted, guess who goes to the hole? Yeah, the alleged victim. Now tell me, how's an inmate supposed to come forward if his attacker is an officer, knowing that he'll be placed in the hole pending "investigation." For him, that could be a very real death sentence.

You know, if people **really** wanted to fix what's wrong with the criminal justice system, they'd restore the right to vote to **ALL** US Citizens, **especially** the ones currently in prison. Otherwise, you've got a bunch of people voting on prison initiatives who have little to no idea of what they're voting on, let alone the potential impact. Having the power to vote opens up so many possibilities. First and foremost, it means that the people most affected by prison initiatives, the people who are in a position to understand them most, finally have a say in whether or not it passes, as opposed to being forced to sit on the sidelines and watch people with no knowledge or experience decide how best to proceed. It also means that, as a voter, it means that your representatives finally see you when you speak up, as opposed to now, when you're ignored unless there are several hundred other people speaking up on your behalf. Last, but certainly not least, having the power to vote is a crucial part of being a productive member of society, which is what all inmates strive for. However, allowing convicted felons to vote is something that will never, ever be allowed to happen, as this would be the first step to overthrowing our current penal system.

Think I don't know what I'm talking about? Then try this little exercise... Pick 10 random people, people who aren't in prison and have never been in prison, and ask them whether or not slavery is legal in the United States. Now, ask those same 10 people whether, illegal or not, slavery is morally acceptable. Now, let's find another set of 10 people to question, but this time, ask current and former prisoners. I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that the first group, those who haven't been to prison, say that slavery is illegal in the United States, and is never morally acceptable, legal or not, while the second group answers that slavery is legal in the United States, but that it's never morally acceptable, legal or not. So, which is right? Believe it or not, the second group, the current and former prisoners, because the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution authorizes slavery and involuntary servitude, or at least, it does when it comes to people who have been convicted of a crime. All of a sudden, the prison industrial complex, and all the problems within it, take on a whole new light, as does the reason for not allowing current and former convicted felons the right to vote.

Just food for thought...

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