

STATE OF CORRECTIONS AND PUBLIC SAFETY
IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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FAILURES TOO GREAT TO IGNORE

by Timothy J. Muise

My journey through the facilities of the department of correction has afforded me the unwanted title of "expert in correctional failure", bestowed upon me by the men and women of the free society reform movement. These true revolutionaries, revolting against diminished public safety and continual societal decay, honor me with thier decision that I am an accurate reporter of the failures of the corrections system, and in that spirit of honor it is my duty to convey to the powers who have the real ability to effectuate change in the system just how grave the failures are. These failures, which I will herein attempt to elucidate, are fully manifesting themselves in the form of stabilized drug use and crime rates, increasing decay of the sanctity of the family unit and moral direction of the citizenry, and most violently in the summer murder "sessions" held each year in the Mattapan corridor and beyond. Through these ills the respect for all human life wanes with no ebb and flow, natures rule being unbalanced.

The concept that how society treats its downtrodden plays a direct role in the health of that society is hard taught. Great societies which in their prime seemed everlasting succumbed to inattention of this core principle of life. Hard taught, but impossible to ignore. Rome burned as Nero fiddled. The time has come in the commonwealth to stop our doomed fiddling or suffer the consequence. Restoring the prison system back to one that offers real opportunity to change will not only deeply impact the fiber of society, but will have an immediate effect on the youth of a state which are anestitized to death and moral decay. Our urban areas, populated by the minority demographics which are at the top of the incarceration percentages, can only be revitalized if the

men/women who reenter these communities after terms of incarceration have some semblance of hope in their hearts. Opportunities for meaningful employment, affordable housing, and relaxed stigmatization for past mistakes create an atmosphere which impacts the still forming philosophy of our youth. In order to bring real attitudinal change to any society you must change how future generations, stakeholders in the welfare of mankind if you will, see their world and its direction. When a child sees no future they act in the immediate. This shortsightedness blinds one to the needs of their peers, to anyone outside of their immediate social circle, eventually bringing us to the place where we are with many of our youth today, devoid of compassion for the human condition. This impact, from poor treatment of the downtrodden to the compassion devoid attitude of our youth, is the fertile soil from which diminished public safety, high crime rates, and murder grows.

To view the daily operations of any prison in the commonwealth is a true marvel of the absurd. The focus on benign control, as exhibited in numerous nonsensical policies, creates such an attitude of true hopelessness that men/women refuse to even investigate the few positive and worthwhile activities that exist. Corrections today makes access to rehabilitative opportunities as "exclusive" as it can be, which is in direct contradiction to the "inclusive" legal mandate of this state. Massachusetts is one of the few states in the nation that has made it a constitutional right of prisoners to be rehabilitated, and possibly even more importantly we have made it the right of the citizenry to be involved in that rehabilitative process. The reform law in the commonwealth (see Chapter 777 of the Acts of 1972) was enacted after true societal recognition of the importance of fair treatment of the incarcerated. This great nation recognized that the rights of the people, declared by our forefathers, shall never be infringed, and it was realized that abusive treatment bred social failure. The Attica riots beamed a light down upon how the social fabric is weakened when

you treat one class of person as lower than another.

The downward spiral of this cycle of madness, and the increase of the "law enforcement industrial complex" insanity, is taking us further and further from where we need to be as far as responsible social policy is concerned. It is difficult to make the average citizen see just how great an impact the abusive treatment of prisoners has on their daily world, it can be a bridge too far, but we must break dawn for them on this fact. Health care costs are increased because disease spreads due to improper medical care in prisons. MRSA is a great example of how an ill which was unaddressed inside prison walls, was taken out by guards and nursing staff into the communities, and now plagues our hospitals and nursing homes. We locked up the crack cocaine users of the late 1980's, leaving their children fatherless, and now those children have formed gangs, searching for that missing male bonding. These gangs are ruining our cities. Summer murders, drug dealing in the streets, and a general lack of respect for life and community, are now some of our biggest problems. Prisoners are neglected when reentering society and thus forced to return to crime to survive.

Many criticize our system of government, as I often have, but we have to admit that if it was run ethically, like it was designed to be. it would in most cases work; that being to protect the freedoms of our Constitution. The states retain autonomy to afford greater protections than some of the minimalist ones of the Federal level of government. Here in the Commonwealth we have created a right to rehabilitation and community access for the prisoner. The citizens let their legislators know that they believed in the redemption of man and that they wanted laws that reflected that belief. The legislators voted in the reform laws we spoke of earlier in this piece, and it is the duty of both the judicial and executive branches of our government to protect those rights. The courts have held on many occasions that prisoners did in fact possess these rights and that there captors were violating those same rights with relative impunity. The failure of the system is that the checks and balances have been ignored to such an extent that it has created a very real conspiracy of

government entities (the legislature, the attorney general, the police, the district attorney, the department of public safety, the department of correction, and the office of the governor himself are all co-conspirators) which is destroying all the other freedoms we are supposed to enjoy as a people. Children kill each other in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan because the social decline of these violations of basic human rights permeate all levels of life. Drug use escalates due to the hopelessness sired by a society with no real respect for the protections of our constitution. It has started in the prisons, moved into all aspects of law enforcement, and now is being visited upon society in the form of deadly social decay.

The state of corrections in Massachusetts is in full disarray. The jobs program of the prison/law enforcement industrial complex in our fine state has depleted the cities and towns of the revenue they need to advance quality of life services. Our misplaced dollars burn in the pockets of men who have been proven to have the highest instances of spousal abuse, drunkenness, and suicide in all the branches of law enforcement. Why is this? It is because the system within which they work has declined into evil depths - depths so low it has burrowed into the hearts of anyone who is exposed to it - especially the guards. Our tax dollars should be invested in youth programs and civic interest groups. You know what your community needs and should be able to have control of how your piece of the tax dollar pie is spent. The billions we have poured into Massachusetts law enforcement has failed us; this is fully proven out by the results and statistics.

The time has come to expose the conspiracy of failure here in the Commonwealth and issue a clarion call for a renewed respect for the rights of the incarcerated. The hope of a new life will bloom in our communities. We will raise the level of consciousness concerning the greater effect the operations of government has on quality of life. The system can only work if we respect the rights of everyone, even the downtrodden prisoner. We want to expose these failures through the organization of an "occupy" event on the grounds of the Prison Complex

in Shirley, Massachusetts. This high profile media event will allow the forces for change to unify in an effort to improve the level of our society. We live together or we die together. It is that simple and serious. We emlore you to join in the open air discussions at the event. We truly need your involvement. The time is here to change the State of Corrections and it must start with a good-ole, grassroots gathering of the tribes! Let's exercise our rights together.

To get involved in the occupy event please contact:

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The failures are too great to ignore.

GET INVOLVED!