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AB

RE-ENTRY (Essay)

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Re-Entry
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If the purpose of prison is not only to punish, but to rehabilitate, then why is the recidivism rate so high? Why is that rate so predictable? And why do so many people who start off with the best intentions fail?

Part of the problem with successful "re-entry" lies in the current approach to "rehabilitation." If "rehabilitation" were a business model, then, quite frankly, it would be broken.

According to Webster's dictionary, to "rehabilitate" means to "restore to one's original condition." — Well, if a man's "condition" upon picking up a prison sentence was that of being a criminal, then, being restored to that original condition is not the recipe for successful re-entry.

A famed psychologist, Abraham Maslow has a theory that he refers to as a "hierarchy of human needs." According to this theory, before a man can reach his true potential, referred to as "self actualization," certain needs must be met. In ascending order, those needs must be met before moving on to the next in order of importance.

re-supply
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The first need can be described as physical; i.e., food, clothing and shelter. These basic, physical, needs must be met before the next level in that hierarchy can be considered.

The next level in that hierarchy of needs deals with matters of security. In other words, how is it possible to protect that which has been acquired, and be confident that those needs will continue to be met for the foreseeable future.

After that 2nd level of needs has been met, a person begins to consider his place as a member of society. These considerations of the role played in society (3) is what leads to level (4) and include issues of self-esteem. Basically, how does he view his own status in relation to that of his peers.

The final level of Self-Actualization comes only after a man presses and begins to achieve those things which give him a sense of fulfillment in relation to his peers. His physical needs met (1), his safety and security assured (2), he can then begin to establish his niche or fulfill his role in society (3). His sense of worth and self-esteem (4) grows as he climbs that proverbial

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"Ladder of Success" → Self-Actualization,
That Final Level, occurs when a person
feels that he has reached his potential
in the pursuit of Life, Liberty and
Happiness.

One of the main reasons that
so many inmates fail to make a
successful re-entry into society, is
that when he is released from
prison, he is expected to start
off on level 3! Even a 30 day
stay in a halfway house does not
come close to providing a reasonable
opportunity for a released inmate
to obtain a decent handhold upon
that "Ladder of Success", never mind
reach that 3rd Rung - Level 3
of the hierarchy of needs, "a productive"
member of society.

If an inmate is "rehabilitated",
that is, "restored" to his original
condition - and that "original condition"
was identified, labeled and deemed
as a threat to society, how can there
be a reasonable expectation of anything
other than recidivism?

The Criminal Justice System
is not broken, it is a well oiled
machine which delivers a steady
stream of Americans into "International
housing" which can cost any white

File Entry
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4-12 From \$25,000 to \$75,000 a year to maintain. When it costs more to incarcerate an individual than it does to attend an Ivy League school, perhaps it's time for reasonable people to consider a different approach.

So what's the answer?

Before we can figure out what does work, we have to acknowledge what does not. "Prison Reform" is not a political hot potato to be tossed from left to right, or painted red or blue. It is not a can of worms to be "kicked down the road" until a simple & obvious "miraculous" appears.

Having grown from 400,000 to 2.5 million, a 600% increase in 40 years, the prison pop. trended downward to 2.2 million briefly before graphically stating for what appears to be a massive increase as the New Attorney General's policies begin to take effect.

At this point, even a doubling of the current prison population could be potentially catastrophic - It's time for "The New Genesis Transition Project." What's that? The subject of another essay. "J"