



PRISON PAWNS

There have been a lot of stabbings and killings in the past year or so here in the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC); in fact, one of the upper staff members said to us recently in a meeting, that, "there's been more stabbings in 2017 alone, than in my whole twenty-plus years as an employee! It's crazy!"

The violence is a response to over a decade of oppression within the system. From 1996 until about 2014, all SCDC did was take away any hope that any prisoner may have ever had--they took away parole for new incoming prisoners (and flat out denied the existing ones), took away "state pay" (which was \$18.25 for TWO WEEKS of hard labor; now it's expected to be done for FREE), took away the extra percentages that could be earned towards release (i.e., educational credits, work credits, etc.), shut down nearly ALL programs and vocational classes, and began a punitive-based approach to their policies and procedures. On top of all of this, the quality (and quantity) of food was greatly reduced, hours of cell-confinement increased, the uniforms were thinned down and made of a cheaper material (cold in winter), shoes were taken away and replaced with imitation Crocs that last about a month....

The point is, they made practically EVERY negative, and vindictive change that anyone could think of; and, over the years, those changes took a toll on prisoner morale. Prisoners without hope, without a future or anything to live for, are very dangerous.

Prisoners were reduces to numbers (mine is SCDC#: 323863), and merely used to collect credit for funding. This is best shown by new prisoners that are processed in, but have a reduced sentence, and when the reduction is applied (these are non-violent drug charges usually) they're released. Never actually stepping foot on the prison yard, or staying for a week or so ... and then sent home. However, the prison (using the Inmate #) claims them for the year, and that number, due to technicalities and loopholes, gives the prison system credit for each number for the year. They're funded for the amount of Inmate Numbers --regardless of how long each "Number" may have actually stayed, or cost. A standard annual amount is calculated for each Number.

There should be a middle court, or way to house such prisoners in such a way that the actual cost of their incarceration in days is allotted. A lot of tax money is being wasted.

Prisoners are used as tax-collectible pawns.

Prisoners need hope! Why treat then like animals; and then act surprised when they respond in kind? It's because more violence, is

exactly what some of the bean counters want. It gives reps the chance to stand straight-faced in front of legislature and say: "You see? You see what these animals are doing? We need new fences. We need more officers. We need new guns, more bullets. We need bullet-proof vests (they did that one a few years back; and then after buying thousands of new bullet-proof vests, a change was made in officer uniforms no longer requiring them to wear them--they wore them for about a month --now only the lowly turnkey guards or search teams are required to wear them). We need more staff. We need new vehicles. They're stabbing everyone!"

Think about it: if they stood in front of legislature and had to report that all was calm--what would happen? Really think about that. And now apply it not just to prisons, but ALL of law enforcement. If they report less violence and less crimes, what happens to the upcoming budget?

It's my opinion that prisons are too big for their own good. They've turned into multi-million-dollar corporations, forgetting the whole idea of rehabilitation.

The pawns would behave better with more societal mobility. Parole should be made available for those willing to earn it. State pay should be brought back for those willing to work for it. More humane food choices should be made by SCDC upper staff, and kitchen supervisors, that don't treat prisoners like dogs (some of this food I would NEVER have even considered feeding my dog). And don't use prisoners as pawns! Most of the prisoners DO HAVE RELEASE DATES at some point, so why not spend those years behind bars--oh, I don't know--rehabilitating?

M.