



THE NEW WORLD NORM?

There are a LOT of older guys here in the prison, and they have a multitude of respiratory issues. In the building where I am currently held captive, there are also some cancer patients, but there is no true distinction between anyone, just thrown together like a bag of unwashed party mix.

The low grade food doesn't help this situation, with the lack of proper nutrition - or any true nutrition at all - it's hard for these guys to stay healthy as it is. Just this morning, the breakfast trays were covered with roaches when delivered. I refused mine (obviously), trashed the food, and returned the tainted tray. The guy delivering it, we will call him Sean, isn't a very bright person. He reminds me of the kid brother of one of my exes. Sean's this obese manchild, and a roach crawling on a food tray is not a serious issue for him - he just sees more food.

That's the problem here. A lot of the guys are not thinking like normal people. Some are actually rooting for the COVID-19 to wreak havoc on the world's population in the hopes that it will somehow help them get back into society. The prisons are broke. The national beast known as Prison Inc. has been eating up tax payer checks for the last 20-plus years growing its gut beyond proportion, and sustainability. No longer can America afford to be a lock-'em-up-and-throw-away-the-key nation. Far too many years passed under the totalitarian/communist type of ideology that infiltrated our legal system.

Under a guise of "anti-crime" our lawmakers, and those who "enforced" law, and ran our prison systems as human warehouses - profited from the business of mass incarceration. But, a few years ago, the veil was lifted, and the greed of imprisonment was shown, with mass incarceration now revealed as a failed enterprise. Those

of the follow-the-leader mindset in law enforcement dreamed of a U.S. with prisons like those thought up in movies. Giant inescapable facilities, where people went in, and never came out. A onetime and done legal system that only understood one line of thought: the printed law, black and white, no gray, no middle ground, no humanity in sentencing. The true goal of humans, should be to do away with crime, not those who would commit it, because that's the lazy cop out. The -- hear no problem, see no problem, speak of no problem, just cash your check and go routine.

Fix the problem!

And now, without the money to feed Prison Inc., the issue of mass incarceration is at hand. Yes, the prisoners did commit crimes, but the system is broken and shattered beyond its original (and Constitutionally adherent) purpose. The reason of a prison, is to remove those deemed too dangerous to be in society, and at least try to rehabilitate them. That's why they are called "correctional" institutions. There are a lot of prisoners lost in the system, who would make positive additions to society, but they are shadowed by the gangbangers that now proliferate in the system. The state ignored gang activity until it got to a point that the gangbangers could no longer be swept under the carpet as they continually killed and rioted, making S.C. prisons now some of the most dangerous in the world, and on all news stations.



In the midst of this COVID-19 outbreak, some states have begun to release nonviolent prisoners. And while S.C. has released many prisoners at the county jail level, prisons have not yet made any such move; but, as things continue to deteriorate in the economy, prisons face a dilemma: how to mass incarcerate, without money; and how to do it while still skating inside the



allowed minimums for human rights? The answer is that it cannot, and should not be done, or even attempted. The prisons were already facing a downsizing, and reform in sentencing, and those issues are now more serious than before because death awaits all those at risk of COVID-19. When (not if) it sweeps through the prisons, it will kill a higher percentage than in the free world, because of how the prisons are kept, and the lack of medical care.

I see a lot of elderly prisoners here, and they are afraid, knowing, each expecting, that they are going to die soon. I am talking about guys that have been here many years, decades, and have never gotten in any trouble. If they were let out, they would pose no threat. Many can barely walk or breathe on their own. If they were released, they would be at home with family, or in some facility for hospice care. Visits were cancelled last month, and there are no outside people coming in except for essential staff and guards. But, the number of guards and prison staff statewide with

COVID-19 rises each week, and soon it will be too late for those prisoners who will succumb to it.

Their blood, on the hands of those who kept them.
In person, on paper, or by vote.

I hope that this epidemic ends soon, and with the *least* amount of deaths. I'm not a Sean, there's more important things than food in this world. Prison Inc. eats tax money, and has avoided a diet for decades. If the country is to truly come together, then it cannot let able-body prisoners go to waste. The women's prison here is making medical masks, over a thousand a day! There's more that can be done, but how bad is this going to get before drastic measures are finally taken and those who can be released are, along with those who could be paroled or put out on probation. I agree, keep the dangerous prisoners where they are: The sex-offenders and those who continually get into trouble and fight or kill here, need to stay. But those incarcerated for crimes decades ago, who have already proven their rehabilitation ten times over, need to be looked at and considered for some kind of release or reduction in sentencing.

There are no gloves, no masks, no bleach or antibacterial anything available. I can attest that myself, that the only things I have access to, are items I purchased myself at the prison store. Alka Seltzer, Ajax dish soap to clean with, and Dial antibacterial soap. If it weren't for *me* buying those items, I wouldn't even be able to wash my hands properly. If I weren't in prison, I'd be helping with the manufacturing of supplies, and delivery. Especially the delivery, I worked my youth as a delivery driver. It's a responsibility of anyone like myself in good health, and not in risk a high risk category, to help who they can.

I feel that this epidemic is just getting started. We were warned for years it could happen, but - it was another problem that was cheaper not to see. We made movies about outbreaks, and scientist said for years how with modern travel an outbreak could shoot across the globe before we realized it. We make movies about the end of our world, and pay money to see them and be entertained by them. Now, here it is, and it has the potential to meet all of our Hollywood expectations. It's the new world norm being born.

No. We won't be under quarantine forever, but we will be changed as a nation, a people, and as a world. Even after a vaccine, the way we interact, especially globally, will never be the same. For years, as Americans we have watched the denizens of other countries walk around in medical masks trying to slow the spread of infectious diseases - it was a lesson we should have learned sooner. Our law enforcement advised against it since they want our faces for facial recognition; but, in the new world norm, designer masks will be, and should be, a modern style attributed to the 2000s. People walking around in cities with Gucci or Armani face masks...



Besides, any facial recognition worth its algorithm will still be able to distinguish different masks and face shapes, while correlating them with known faces. A person could then be identified

by a loose fabric somewhere on their mask, or the unique pattern, a stain, color, or fading, etc. etc.

Some businesses that never delivered before, will now keep it as a part of their business model. TV shows (and news) will never be the same. How we shop, is forever impacted. How we travel. How we greet, and who we trust. People show their true colors in times like this. Going into worldwide quarantine is a pivotal moment in human history. How we treated each other - prisoners included - marks our character, and how our society as a people will be remembered by future historians: religions are full of, and based widely on, lessons learned through prisoners, and how nations treated them.

Here in prison, most of the staff and guards who are present, are treating us with respect, and helping as much as they can. Giving masks to those of high risk when they can, especially workers, but there are little to no supplies (just as with everywhere else), and their hands are tied.

When we watch movies (and TV), or internet shows, it's not wise to expect mass incarceration - and super-prisons - to fix anything, especially crime. It's no more realistic than expecting a vampire uprising or riding off into the sunset for a happily ever after. Life doesn't work that way. On the other side of that sunset is usually the Texas or Mexican desert, or some remote corner of the world with its own set of problems; and running to it fixes nothing. Building a prison in every corner of every state, only pushes one problem into another, and expecting it to magically disappear, fix itself, or leaving it for the next person in charge to worry about, is just stupid and lazy thinking.

I hope that everyone out there is okay.

This time will pass, and it will be a defining moment in our lives. Just as those who survived the black plague or the 1918 flu outbreak that killed 20 million people worldwide. Over history, many epidemics have occurred. In London, The Great Plague of 1664-1666 lasted for approximately 18 months and claimed more victims than any of the previous plagues there. In addition to the mortality, they experienced a decline of trade and services leading to loss of businesses. Sufferers were confined to their households, and corpses buried in mass graves. Nearly 70,000 burials of plague victims were recorded during those months. We writers are the ones recording not just the facts, but the emotions and environment of such events. There was a diarist Samuel Pepys, who experienced those 18 months, and recorded them in his entries, and letters. Words that seem a little eerie, too familiar to what we see now, today. Here is one:

Letter from Pepys on the Plague

To Lady Carteret

Woolwich, September 4, 1665

The absence of the court and emptiness of the city takes away all occasion of news, save only such melancholy

stories as would rather sadden than find your ladyship any divertisement in the hearing. I having stayed in the city till above 7,400 died in one week, and of them above 6,000 of the plague, and little noise heard day or night but tolling of bells; till I could walk Lombard Street and not meet twenty persons from one end to the other, and not fifty upon the Exchange; till whole families, ten and twelve together, have been swept away; till my very physician, Dr. Burnet, who undertook to secure me against any, infection, having survived the month of his own house being shut up, died himself of the Plague; till the nights, though much lengthened, are grown too short to conceal the burials of those that died the day before, people being thereby constrained to borrow daylight for that service; lastly, till I could find neither meat nor drink safe, the butcheries being everywhere visited, lily brewer's house shut up, and my baker, with his whole family, dead of the Plague.

Greenwich begins apace to be sickly; but we are, by the command of the king, taking all the care we can to prevent its growth; and meeting to that purpose yesterday after sermon with the town officers, many doleful informations were brought us, and among others this, which I shall trouble your ladyship with the telling. Complaint was brought us against one in the town for receiving into his house a child newly brought from an infected house in London. Upon inquiry we found that it was the child of a very able citizen in Gracechurch Street, who, having lost already all the rest of his children, and himself and wife being shut up and in despair of escaping, implored only the liberty of using the means for the saving of this only babe, which with difficulty was allowed, and they suffered to deliver it, stripped naked, out at a window into the arms of a friend, who, shifting into fresh clothes, conveyed it thus to Greenwich where, upon this information from Alderman Hooker, we suffer it to remain. This I tell your ladyship as one instance of the miserable straits our poor neighbours are reduced to.

Source: Pepys, Samuel. *Diary and Correspondence of Samuel Pepys, F.R.S.*
London: H. G. Bohn, 1858.

What will be read of us, by 2220? Once enough time has passed that people can look back objectively...