

## THE PRISON SYSTEM IS BROKEN

Prisons are monsters born of hypocrisy, fed on falsehood, kept alive by political hacks, degrading to humanity and bringing forth in its travail a hideous brood of strife, conflict and vows of retribution. Prisons are key components of the state's coercive apparatus, the overriding function of which is to ensure social control. Prisons operate as instruments of class domination, a means of prohibiting poor people from encroaching upon the rich people.

Due to the huge amount of incessant propaganda and misinformation coming from the Prison Industrial Complex and some local, state and federal political hacks, the majority of the general public have been hoodwinked into believing that prisons help to fight crime. The fact of the matter is mass incarceration and building more prisons to fight crime is similar to pouring gasoline on a burning fire. Prison as a means of curing moral infirmities is undoubtedly fallacious. Prisons kill incrementally and slowly. The whole of prison discipline is injurious, degrading, and debasing. Solitary confinement is inhumane. The prison system in the United States is a cruel warehousing institution that is enormously costly, and burdensome that neither rehabilitates nor protects society.

It is time to remember what being human was and is all about. We have to be effective, and not just defiant. We must promote and proclaim the truth, the essential truth about prisons, and the Criminal Justice System. With progressive creativity and awakened compassionate intelligence, we can and must come together and solve the problems created by prisons. People when aroused can play a powerful role in shaping the policies that affect them. They know how thrilling it is to be part of a movement, to care passionately about something, and to join with others to stand united for what they believe in.

When such people have faith and determination, and show their power

through individual and collective voices by not remaining silent, can topple governments. When people take power into their own hands, they bring each other together nationally in a way that no government could. They will gain fearlessness and self-determination and will refuse to be pushed around again. Fierce grassroots resistance is urgently needed to bring radical and meaningful change. Change is not the same thing as progress. In fact change can be the opposite. It can be regressive as we are learning from the U.S. Congress. Power and big money never give up anything without a struggle. When pressured they will fight dirty. The present economic system is where the privileged few make sure the super rich get richer and the government helps them do it. Our government has been bought off! Welcome plutocracy. Socrates said "to understand a thing, you must first name it!" The name for what is happening to our political system is corruption, a deep systemic corruption.

Taking on big money and the power elite, we need to focus on organizing a broad-based coalition, one that is smart about the nuts-and-bolts of building a people's coalition. We must also investigate other political and social problems and become more than the single issue for abolition of prisons. There is a severe social crisis taking place in America predicated in part on the ever-increasing mass consciousness of deepening social contradictions, that is pushing the political function of the prisons to surface in all its brutality. Plutocracy is running roughshod over human dignity. The struggle to abolish prisons is also the struggle against all dimensions of social and racial political oppression and poverty.

The history of the United States has been filled from its inception by an enormous quantity of unjust laws, far too many expressly bolstering the oppression of poor black, white, brown, Asian, and Native Americans. While the lofty notions affirming human liberty were being formulated by those who penned the United States Constitution, African Americans lived and labored in chains. Not

even the term "slavery" was allowed to mar the sublime concepts articulated in the Constitution, which refers to "persons held to service or labor" as those exceptional human beings who did not merit the right and guarantees otherwise extended to all. It is abundantly clear from a careful reading of the Declaration of Independence that our nation was born from nothing less than the rebellion of the human spirit against the arrogance of power.

I strive to help build a huge democratic movement, an organized people force that is as strong, determined and savvy as the huge organized money force that wants to continue to control us. When we mobilize, e.g. 100,000 people, the math is all of a sudden on our side. It's going to be a long and tough road to travel. Let us begin to bring meaningful long lasting positive change by telling the truth to the general public and believing in ourselves and our mission and to trust and have faith in others to carry on after we are gone. I maintain perspective and hope. This kind of duality, the coexistence of horrible injustice and redeeming humanity is central to my mission in life.

I ask people to help build a solid commitment to peace and social justice wherever they may be. Let us begin community mobilization and transformation that brings out the best in us. Meaningful change can start with small acts. The way for everyday people to get justice is to fight for it and become part of something bigger. I am centered on positive and productive planning and action, e.g. combating poverty, discrimination, ignorance, injustice, domestic violence, economic violence, sexual violence, homophobic violence, corporate violence and police violence. (I find all this stuff grotesque.)

I am trying hard to do the right and good thing. If we decide not to do anything, because it seems to be impossible, or its too hard, then nothing will ever be done. I have witnessed huge amounts of despair, hopelessness, and uncertainty among prisoners. I have been a prisoner for 35 years. I have worked with prisoners to open

windows of knowledge, and creativity, and inspire a love of learning and impart crucial life skills such as being able to get along well with others be they other prisoners or non prisoners and family members and friends.

The majority of prisoners released from prison are embittered, poorly educated, lacking marketable skills and forced to return and live in the same horrific environment they grew up in. There is little sentiment in the general public for getting involved with prisoners or ex-prisoners. The skyrocketing punishment industry, whose growth is silently but powerfully sustained by the persistence of racism, creates an economic demand for more prisons and thus similarly spiraling criminalization practices, which in turn, fuels the fear of crime.

I have devoted a considerable portion of this article to an exploration of situations regarding prisons, political propaganda espoused by the Prison Industrial Complex and the push by local, state and federal governments wasting huge amounts of money on building more prisons. There has not been sustained effective analysis or organizational effort towards creating a powerful grassroots prison abolition movement. There are some small prison abolition organizations. I call for abolitionist activism that strategically avoids demands for reform that might further strengthen the prison system. We must look at and discuss and resolve the problems prisons create, for example, the way the system continues to play a critical role in the racialization of punishment. We have to create ways to dismantle the system that creates and sustains even more poverty, crime and racism. In sum, the biggest dealers and profiteers in crime, are not the Mafia organizations, nor the Latin drug cartels, it's the U.S. government. Wars will never bring lasting peace, nor will prisons bring an end to crime.

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