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Rehabilitate or Punish

Historically America's prison judicial system has neglected to rehabilitate or reform its thousands upon thousands of detainees. These institutions are lacking physical and mental health treatment, life and occupational skill programs. Sadly, they're lacking the simple regard to human life. The re-entry into prison rate of the United States is at a staggering eighty percent.

In Michael Moore's film *Where to Invade Next?* A documentary where he set out to explore European Countries in the hopes of finding out how to make America great again. Moore travels to Norway to assess and compare the Norwegian prison system, and found that the prison system there focuses more on rehabilitation than retribution.

When the warden of the Norwegian prison, Tom Eberhardt was explaining to Moore the rationale behind their theory of rehabilitation as oppose to revenge, he explained that the only punishment was that the inmate being kept away from one's family and friends. They call it making them good neighbors and that I can agree upon however, the leniency with which the superiors were dealing with the inmates was borderline craziness. For example, they interviewed a guy who was convicted of murder who worked in the kitchen area with knives, forks, meat cleavers and other sharp utensils. In Addition, the inmates can go swimming, fish, and live in houses with rooms that look like college dorms on acres of manicured land. Better circumstances than most tax paying, law abiding citizens or member of

society can't have. Prompting Michael Moore to ask, "Where is the punishment?"

One of the inmates that was interviewed said that it was only four guards to a hundred and fifteen inmates, if there was an uprising, the correction officers would be drastically outnumbered and would ultimately would be forced to surrender.

Not to mention that the warden also said that this was an idea that came from America, and that our founding fathers put it in the constitution that say, "No cruel and unusual punishment." America wrote that. Although I'm not in total agreement with the Norwegians approach, Norway has one of the lowest recidivism rates at twenty percent.

Michael Moore then visited a high maximum-security prison also in Norway, where the prisoners did not have so much freedom. In 2010 when the prison first opened, the guards made an orientation video of "We are the World" as a welcoming video for the felons. The prison was beautiful with modern and brail art displayed throughout the corridors of the prison. The prisoners had video games, flat screen televisions, and keys to their rooms and several other amenities. In addition, the captives had full access to a recording studio, a pantry that resembled a convenient store and a library that was better than some public schools and libraries in the United States of America.

So, the question becomes when a person in Norway commits a heinous crime, should they have the opportunity to become a good neighbor? Or should they suffer a more strenuous punishment like inmates endure here in the united states?

With the resources that these inmates have I do agree that is very effective for the re-entry into society with very small chance on returning to prison. But by the same token, it also has to be remembered that these individuals committed crimes. Crimes that if were committed in the United States sometimes the punishment is death. If I was a citizen of Norway and had become victim at the

hands of reformed prisoners, I would not find justice in this system.

Should prison systems in the United States focus more on rehabilitation rather than punishment?

Before we can talk about rehabilitation in the United States Prison System we must fix the thing that is limiting our chances of having better facilities and or treatment for inmates here. You have guards displaying behavior that violates a criminal law.

“We learned of inmates who worked with prison guards to deal drugs. We heard about others who used drugs for the first time while incarcerated. Instead of getting rehab. Those who came in addicted often got worse. We found inmates who used their time not to gain a trade but to learn how to more craftily commit crimes upon release.” (*Rehabilitate or punish?*)

United States Prison Systems are understaffed and inmates are not being mentally prepared for re-entry into society.

“In many prison systems, psychologists are the primary mental health care providers, with psychiatrists contracted on a part-time basis. Psychologists provide services ranging from screening new inmates for mental illness to providing group therapy and crisis counseling.” (*Rehabilitate or punish?*)

“They also provide rehabilitative services that are useful even for prisoners without serious mental illnesses, says Fagan. For example, a psychologist might develop special programs for substance abusers or help prisoners prepare for the transition back to the community.” (*Rehabilitate or punish?*)

“But they often struggle to implement such programs while keeping up with their regular prison caseloads. “We’re focused so much on the basic mental health services that there’s not enough time or emphasis to devote to rehabilitative services,” says Robert Morgan, PhD, a psychologist at Texas Tech University who has worked in federal and state prisons and studies treatment methods for inmates.”

(Rehabilitate or punish?)

"Norway and Germany and Denmark and all these other places show that the exact opposite is true,

" Specter says. "If the staff behave in a more humane, respectful, productive and constructive way, the people who are incarcerated will respond in kind." (Donald Spector)

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