A Look at the Facts
by Abby

More than 2.4 million inmates are held within U.S. prisons and jails. Rehabilitation programs are crucial upon release, but not every jail and prison advocates for rehabilitation. There is educational, vocational, substance abuse and mental health, cognitive reconstruction, behavioral treatment, R&R (reasoning and rehabilitation), and MRT (moral recognition therapy) offered through rehabilitation programs. Offenders who have received their high school diploma are shown to have a higher likelihood of obtaining a job after release. Those receiving vocational skills training have a higher likelihood of earning higher wages. Drug treatment programs given to offenders while in prison show a less likelihood of relapsing by the time they are released. If every prison implemented effective programs available to its offenders, recidivism rates would be decreased by nearly 15-20% (Petersilla, 2011). The recidivism rate in the U.S. is relatively high compared to other countries which suggests that the U.S. prison system is ineffective when it comes to rehabilitation (Ward et al, 2015). Although there are some prisons who strive to educate and rehabilitate inmates, the majority exist to punish the offender and protect the public (Ward et al, 2015).

When dealing with mental health, prisons are likely to have a psychologist come in on a part time basis. These individuals can help with mental illness by providing group therapy or crisis counseling. Nearly 15-20% of offenders in prison are mentally ill (Benson, 2003), and in result should be in a mental institution rather than a correctional institution. Although some prisons focus on mental health, there is a struggle to then focus on rehabilitation services as well, limiting one or both of the services. These programs are often hard to implement because prisons also lack resources. Many of these services require professionals providing the services necessary, but with limited resources that is nearly impossible. The focus of prison has always been on punishment, so it is hard to provide effective rehabilitation programs. The attitude that “nothing works” toward rehabilitation is wrong, because when properly implemented, rehabilitation services, in fact, ease prisoners’ transitions when released (Benson, 2003). Rehabilitation service have shown to have a positive effect on prisoners and are given better opportunities to succeed when released. So when will people realize that rehabilitation should no longer take the back seat to “getting tougher on crime”?

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Source List
Rehabilitation Can Change the World

by William

What is the process for rehabilitation? First, let’s define the word.

rehabilitate
to help (a prisoner, etc.) adapt to society after a stay in an institution; to put back in good condition; to restore rights or privileges; to help (a sick person, etc.); to adjust to normal conditions after illness

After defining the word “rehabilitate”, I have come to the conclusion that the Maryland Prison System is not designed to reform or rehabilitate anyone that gets caught in its grasp. Which leads to the question: “Are inmates being rehabilitated or warehoused in the Maryland Prison System?” Yes, there are self-help programs that are designed to help inmates rehabilitate themselves—such as the Alternative to Violence Project (AVP), anger management, JCI Scholar Program, Friend of a Friend, Youth Challenge, Thinking for A Change, Purpose Driven Life, etc. But 99% of these programs were created by the men and women who are being warehoused in these institutions or by outside resources that do not have anything to do with the prison administration. The United States Prison System was built for punishment and profit, not rehabilitation. Why? Because rehabilitation is not profitable!!

Rehabilitation means low recidivism rates; low recidivism rates means empty prisons; empty prisons means the end of a trillion-dollar business. (Prison Industrial Complex) In the United States there are 2.3 million people in prison and 4.5 million people on parole or probation. The state gets 30 to 40 thousand (depending on the state) dollars per inmate each year just to keep them locked up. Now multiply 30 thousand times 2.3 million. That’s a lot of money!! If you were to remove all of the programs from the Maryland prison institutions that were created by the inmates and outside resources, there would be no programs left to help rehabilitate the prison population. I ask again, are inmates being rehabilitated or warehoused? Yes, rehabilitation begins with the individual who is seeking change, but the government has a duty and responsibility to the citizens in society to make sure the prison system is designed to rehabilitate everyone who enters it, because these same individuals will eventually be released back into our communities. Society has to be more accepting of the people that are being re-entered back into the community. How does society expect ex-offenders to go home and be productive citizens when society rejects them because of their past mistakes? The rehabilitation process does not stop once the ex-offender is released from prison. The rehabilitation process is a never-ending journey for ex-offenders because we have to constantly prove to ourselves and society that we deserve a second chance at life as a whole. I am not trying to bash the Maryland Prison System, but rehabilitation is a non-existing factor in their curriculum. Why do I say that? For example, if an individual is serving a 30-year prison sentence, he would have five years left on this entire sentence in order to be transferred to a prison that will provide him with the opportunity to learn a real vocational trade that will benefit him when he gets released. Why not have these kinds of vocational trade programs in every prison, for every prisoner, no matter how much time he/she is serving? Why isn’t there a system in place to help get to the root of the problem? I think there should be a drug addiction program in every Maryland correctional institution. The only way WE can fix any problem is by collectively attacking the root of the problem! Ask yourself: “What are you doing to help fix the problem?”

“The rehabilitation process is a never-ending journey”
A Lifer’s Take on Rehabilitation

by Sino

I interviewed a subject, whom we’ll call “Ty”, that graciously agreed to the following Q & A style interview pertaining to rehabilitation in Maryland prisons. This individual was chosen for the interview because he is a pillar of this community (Prison), and because of his exemplary behavior within the community. Despite his many years in incarceration, he has managed to motivate himself to excellence and serve as a role model to other inmates. Thus, playing a critical role in the system of the rehabilitation process.

Sino: What is your term of confinement?
Ty: I have a life plus twenty-year sentence.

Sino: How many years have you served so far?
Ty: 26 years.

Sino: What is your interpretation of rehabilitation?
Ty: The correcting of character and behavior that is at odds with social norms (as it deals with criminal behavior). It is the process of putting something back in its acceptable condition.

Sino: Do you believe rehabilitation in prisons exist?
Ty: Yes, but not as a mandate on the part of the prison administration. It is a self-initiated endeavor solely on the part of the inmate.

Sino: From your perspective, what do you see the State of MD attempt to do as it relates to rehabilitation?
Ty: Offer self-help programs, on a variety of levels, plus GED and institutional employment to learn some skills.

Sino: How can an inmate effectively be rehabilitated?
Ty: By applying themselves to spiritual, educational, mental programs and group sessions. Also, possessing the desire to better themselves and never return to the old way of thinking.

Sino: Who has a stake in the rehabilitation process?
Ty: The inmate, the institution and community. Everyone involved in the inmate’s life benefits from their personal growth.

Sino: Who should be involved in the rehabilitation process?
Ty: The inmate, the institution, the courts and government. Of course, family is very important.

Sino: Thank you very much for your time and for answering my questions.
Ty: You welcome. Anytime, Sino.
Mike & Ike
The Tale of Two Men in Two Very Different Systems
by Justin

Mike grew up in a low-income, high-crime neighborhood in a major U.S. city. Without positive role models, access to education, or opportunities to better himself, he turned to a life of crime. At the age of 18, he was arrested, tried in a court of law, and convicted of a felony. Mike is now a part of the American Criminal Justice System.

Ike grew up in a low-income, high-crime neighborhood in a major European city. Without positive role models, an interest in school, or motivation to better himself, he turned to a life of crime. At the age of 18, he was arrested, tried in a regional court, and convicted of a felony. Ike is now part of a European criminal justice system.

Mike is sent to one of the 1,800 U.S. prison facilities. He immediately realizes that he will no longer be treated like a normal member of society. With shackles around his ankles, waist, and hands, he enters an old, dirty facility and begins the processing procedures. He is given an old mattress and not much else before he is assigned to a cell block. Like over half of the nation’s correctional institutions, this one is operating above its intended capacity. With no bunks available, Mike is forced to sleep on the floor.

Ike is sent to one of his country’s 200 penal institutions. He enters the clean, modern-looking facility with cuffs around his wrists. After processing, he is assigned to his own cell. He is given a key to his cell, for privacy reasons, and basic toiletries, bed fittings, and materials for reading and writing.

Mike has been in prison for a few weeks now. The days are long, boring, and repetitive. He regularly interacts with the officers who work at the facility. They have gone through three to six months of training to teach them how to use different levels of force, control entry in and out of different sections of the prison, and react to violent situations that may arise. Educational and vocational classes are hard to come by, so Mike spends the majority of each day in his cell or in the day room talking with his fellow inmates. He tries to get a job in the facility, but positions are limited and inmates with tenure are first in line when there is an opening.

Ike has been locked up for several weeks now. He has a large amount of control over what he does during the day. He regularly interacts with the officers who work at the facility. They have gone through two years of psychological education and training, with a focus on diffusing tense situations before they escalate. There are many classes and training programs available, and Ike enrolls in courses that will teach him life and job skills that will aid in his transition to the outside world. Many of the jobs available to inmates within the facility are taken, so Ike takes part in a work release that employs him outside of the facility five days a week.

Mike has been in a U.S. prison for five years. His last few weeks of incarceration have been virtually no different from his first. It is time, however, for him to be released back into society. He has acquired no additional education, job skills, or mechanisms for coping with life on the outside. He is processed, and sent back to the low-income, high-crime neighborhood in which he got arrested.

There is a 75% chance Mike will return to prison within five years.

Ike has been in a European prison for five years. During his last few weeks of incarceration, he has spent his weekends outside of the walls of the institution. His good behavior has afforded him weekend leave, and he has become comfortable in the community. He has obtained enough education and vocational skills to guarantee employment upon release.

There is a 25% chance Ike will return to prison at any point in his life.

My Metamorphosis
by Sino

Upon seeing me... there would be no doubt that you would turn, and from 0-60 in 5 burn out of bound.
I was not on solid ground and so I morphed into a blood hound.
The hunt was on and so I became that plague, that pile of mess...
This... is my metamorphosis.
I was not to be touched, probed or poked with a 20 foot pole, much less with a 10 foot pole.
Everything I touched, gazed at or even though about... turned into some mess...
This is my reality...
This... is my metamorphosis.

My inner essence screamed, “No!” But this is all I know!
This is what I was trained and disciplined to do... I was born into this.
I am just keeping it “real!”
I had to wreak havoc because it was expected.
It was all you saw in me.
I had no sense and there was no drugs to dispense, which made you tense.
Through your lens... I was densed.

This... is my metamorphosis.

In my dysfunction I laid a path of destruction without any obstruction.
I sought to function, but it was in conjunction with dysfunction.
I couldn’t function...

My actions slowly began to lose traction.
My digression was met with progression.
No longer desiring transgression, but transformation.