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The inhumane treatment of being Incarcerated

This paper will be focusing on the failing system of Mass Incarceration throughout the United States. The United States is the world leader in incarceration, holding over 2.1 million total prisoners. In contrast, when we compare today's population to 1972 where the population was only 200,00 the numbers had increased by more than 2 million people. Here in the U.S, we lock up a higher share of our citizens than any other developing nation across the world. This increase had devastated a large portion of minorities families, especially Blacks and Hispanics, throughout the country, leading to family separation and destroying them at the same time.

I will also be explaining how this population experiences little to no help in their preparation to be released back into society. Many people that experienced incarceration had suffered severe trauma while being detained and had even lost a sense of belonging around their loved ones. This paper will be pointing out the specific reasons why our Incarceration system is failing and destroying the lives of many individuals.

One of the biggest problems I have with the Incarceration system is their inhumane treatment of people. For many years, correctional officers had been abusing inmates mentally, physically, and even sexually. Some inmates even believe that they have no human rights as an individual because of their incarceration. One of the worst types of punishment a person can experience is becoming isolated for long periods while only coming out of the cell for 1 hour a day. On any given day, there are an estimated 55,000 to 62,500 people that had experienced more than 15 days in solitary confinement. Furthermore, solitary confinement had been known to do more harm than good. There have been many studies that demonstrated the harmful and often long-lasting effects this treatment has on the human mind and body. Inmates are placed in solitary confinement for days, months, and even years. This type of punishment can have a tremendous effect on an individual's health, causing permanent changes to the person's brain and personality.

Exploitation is also another common punishment for an inmate to experience. Especially since inside the facilities, there is no outside supervision. I recently spoke to a person that was locked up in a state prison known as Rikers Island in New York City. He explained that he had been sentenced to 6 months in jail for a minor nonviolent crime. Soon after arriving, he was forced to wake up at 3 am and prepare breakfast to serve to other inmates that were in solitary confinement before 6 am. Then, pick up the trays and clean them, sit in a small room the size of a closet and wait for lunch to arrive around 11 am to serve lunch again. Lastly, he would pick up the trays and clean them again to finish the shift. This person worked close to 12hrs per day 5 days of the week. All for 30\$ a week in commissary money which only adds up to 50 cents per hrs.

Officers in this facility have little to no care about the health and well-being of their Inmates. There are forced to work in the worst circumstances and long hours. They don't have any sick days off and if refuse to work they would be placed in solitary confinement for weeks or even months. Many working inmates run the risk of being attacked by other inmates that are serving longer sentences and got nothing to lose while the inmates are working. The guy I interviewed told me how while serving the food, an inmate who is facing a life sentence would threaten him with throwing liquid acid or defecation when he came to serve the next time around if he did not place money in his account and bring him snacks.

A non-violent person that is serving time in prison can become traumatic and anxious from all of these experiences. Not to mention, the living condition in this facility are unimaginative. They can be held in a small room with a temperature over 100 degrees and have no AC, they can also be in a freezing room with no heat on. Not to mention, the numerous disease and infections that are spread daily in prison for the lack of hygiene. During this pandemic, many inmates suffer from Covid 19 and did not receive the proper care. All of this inhumane treatment goes on without any media coverage or politicians getting involved in these issues.

While doing my research I came across something I was not familiar with “Convict leasing”. After the Civil War, southern states came across a shortage of labor due to the release of slavery. However, many states realized that the 13th amendment that was intended to free the slaves had a clause in it that allowed for the re-enslavement of people if they’re convicted of a crime. Many laws were implemented to provoke the arrest of blacks, the state and prison system benefitted from leasing the prisoners to wealthy white men to work in large plantations, mines, and Construction companies without inmates receiving any benefits. Eventually, this led to the mass incarceration of black men which can also be considered another form of legal slavery.

Prison labor has been a part of the U.S economy since at least the 19th century. Today it’s a multi-billion-dollar industry with incarcerated people doing everything from making furniture, military equipment, manufacturing sectors, and cleaning and doing laundry for big companies. In addition, these same inmates can't get a decent job in those same companies they worked for during their time in prison once they get out. Prisons in America are some of the biggest and most dysfunctional businesses we have in our society. Over, 4,100 corporations' profit from mass incarceration in the United States. These corporations all variety from providing expensive telephone services to overpriced commissaries.

The Jim Crow Era was also another devastating event in our society that led to mass incarceration for Black Americans. Blacks were segregated, beaten, and put in prison infrequently. This led to numerous families being separated, which eventually had caused a tremendous effect on the Black communities. During This Era, Blacks were being thrown in prison for as little as walking into the wrong restaurant or sitting in the front of the bus. Even though this was eventually overturned by the supreme court during Brown vs Board of Education, there were many discrimination and wrong imprisonments during the Jim Crow era

Another historical event that had an effect on how minorities were being treated was” the war on Drugs”. This was one Law that really affected minorities communities and led to mass incarceration especially among Black Americans. This Law which was meant to be “tough on crime”, was one of the key components in the 1990s for overly criminalizing Blacks and Hispanics. This policy had everything from providing funds for more prisons, allowing offices across the country to carry out more drug-related arrests, and the three-strike provision which met that if an individual if arrested 3 times for possession of narcotics they could possibly be

facing a life sentence. Unfortunately, this law that caused an incredible amount of people to serve extremely long prison sentences was written by our current President Joe Biden.

Have you ever wondered why most inmates usually go back to prison after only 6 months of being released? The incarceration system could do a much better job in rehabilitating and preparing them back into society. However, most inmates are labeled as no good individuals that deserve to be kept away from society. This couldn't be farther from the truth. Not everybody that commits a crime or is placed in prison is a criminal; some are alcoholics and drug addicts that are only trying to provide a way to support their addiction. This people are not bad individuals, they most likely are dealing with a sickness that needs treatment, not punishment. Being locked up does not address the problem of those individuals. We have to do a much better job in offering a different alternative than placing these people in prison.

Mental Health issues are also another form of unnecessary punishment for people in prison. An estimated 56 percent of state prisoners, 45 percent of federal prisoners, and 64 percent of jail inmates have a mental health problem. Many mentally ill people are not receiving the proper support or medication inside of the prison and usually, their symptoms worsen over time. Sadly,

because mentally ill people are difficult to handle at times many correctional officers and inmates usually commit physical harm toward these individuals in a way to try to control them.

Reference Citation

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