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Mistreatment of Prisoners in America

Imagine being stripped of your human rights, living a life experiencing physical and sexual abuse and the people who are around, are either the ones causing your suffering or don't care enough to help end it. This is what U.S. prisoners have been experiencing throughout their sentences. Prisoner mistreatment is an issue that has been ignored by most. These prisoners live in a constant state of fear and abuse, and nothing is being done to protect them. I'm sure many of you might think, "why should I care, this person is a criminal, they deserve it". While it is true that some of these prisoners have committed violent acts, some of these prisoners have committed crimes most might consider non-violent and minor. Also, most of the violent acts performed on many of the inmates are similar to crimes some inmates have committed leading to their imprisonment. Yes, it is true these inmates have committed crimes, some have made mistakes that have hurt others, but treating these inmates in this manner will not help them correct themselves and their mistakes.

Mistreatment in American Prisons are a massive problem, and here's why. People are being stripped of their fundamental human rights. The American system is simply not working; guards are sexually assaulting inmates. Inmates receive little to no shelter or being hygienically cared for. Mistreatment of mentally ill is an unresolved issue and governments are doing nothing to stop it. Prison abuse of the mentally ill is happening so often because they are the most vulnerable. Activists who are professionally trained in human rights are protesting on the streets constantly. These people need to be heard. The scariest part about all this is: America is not a 3rd world country. If they fail to act quick, incarceration and human rights violations might become one of the worst epidemics in our country. The national and state government should pay attention to these underlying concerns. Lawmakers and politicians, I'm talking to you. Do what's right for the sake of every single mistreated prisoner alive today.

This stems from much more than a cultural issue. It is also a massive racial issue. Black people on average receive 30% more punishment than white people, determined by court due process. The jury is fairly selected; the judges are not. Based on statistical data, judges in the southernmost countries, like Alabama and Mississippi, are biased towards whites. The rich also receive significant privileges, such as bail and even tactics like bribery. Corruption is a major issue here in America. A rich white male can completely change the tide of the justice system, meanwhile, the poor black male sits in a court jailhouse waiting to rot.

The problem has not been addressed because there's not enough public outrage on the flawed system thus far. The government can simply ignore our outcries unless civilians' bond together and protest louder. Some solutions have unfortunately fallen short because of economic issues like funding. Discourse communities like the police force, prison guards, prison inmates,

ex-convicts, lawyers, juries, and judges are all involved in this situation. They all play a role in ensuring that treatment is fair and just. Yes, even ex-convicts and inmates have something to say about this. They can never be so sure of who's innocent and who's guilty.

We went to Harlem and interviewed a couple of black students in order to get their perspective on the whole race issue in prisons. We decided that these black students can relate to these issues much better than others. We asked them questions like "What do you think about America's prison system?" One answered with "I think that the American prison system should be overhauled because it isn't fair some blacks out here get assaulted by the policeman" I asked another older student and he said "It's the governments issue, the corruption is a major problem and many are not doing much to stop it." We noted that either of these claims can be factual. We then turned to a source called Reddit, a social media platform, to broaden my understanding of the cause. There we chatted with a professional law major and historian. He said, "Racism roots back to the 18th century in America, it's too late to be changed, but we can diminish the damage." This one we can wholeheartedly agree with. The race is an ongoing issue in America, and Black people are seen as monsters, unfortunately. Even though it has improved, you can't just remove it.

As for the mental health evaluations, we interviewed psychiatrist Doctor Thomas Lang on his thoughts of mental health issues in prisons. We felt like he was a solid individual to speak to regarding the topic of mental health, working at a hospital for many years. I asked him a question: "What do you think are the side effects of inmates under sexual abuse and solitary confinement?" He responded with "After a few weeks, you will start noticing brain damage in their head; they start walking unusually; they don't behave like their former self. After a few

months, they will start to have severe psychological trauma, PTSD being one of them. Most of them can't recover once they get out of prison; commit the same crime again, and get sent back" Then he added "Of course this doesn't apply to every prisoner, it's just an example of an average specimen. Others adapt and are much more strong-willed than some." So, we were really fascinated by this. We slowly started to understand how serious of a problem this is. Prison sentences aren't just a time-based number – it's much worse.

Here's a couple of solutions: Our first one is increased rehabilitation for the mentally ill prisoners. It gives them a chance to redeem themselves by doing chores, working out, or making food for other inmates inside the prison. As we learned from Dr. Lang, a weak mental state isn't stagnant; it can be recovered by gradual human interaction. Rehab can be done by usual visits to the psychiatrists and therapists to administer humane drugs certified by professional PhDs. This solution I can agree with, it's reasonable whilst also possible. It won't be too much of a hassle to approve.

The second solution is more government funding for prisons, to improve the sanitary state of prisons. This proposal can be tricky. The government isn't nice enough to hand out free money to whatever your cause is. We have to pressure them to do it. The pressure can begin from protests and voting for politicians who have similar beliefs. In terms of what this funding can be used for, I would say definitely cleaner facilities and humane alternatives; they can get really creative with this.

The final solution is to get lawyers to help. I think this one is a general improvement and a step in the right direction. It's recommended getting the law on your side if there's a legal issue.

The prosecution team can be withheld by a good defense team, having the defendant earn more rights to protect him/herself from racial/sexual/religious accusations. It might even reduce his/her prison sentence and the condition the individual is put in.

In the end, we chose the lawyer solution because legal challenges are what this is all about. They can sue the court for unreasonable punishment or attacking constitutional rights. Possible consequences of the solution are that the prosecution team can counter our defense and give the inmate even harsher punishments, even if there's a chance he/she's innocent. It also costs a lot of money to go the lawyer path, but it's way more effective than protesting, like come on. Protesting would take a long time to get anything done anyways.

Our recommended solution is a legal uphill battle to get inmates fairer treatment, better access to mental health support, reduced racial anxiety, and basic human needs. Human rights have to be supported in this case. This has been going on for far too long, and change is needed. Prison guards need body cameras to capture any illegal activities they might be doing. America needs this, and everyone should join the fight. No one deserves to be treated like this.

Prisoner abuse must be stopped, we need to put an end to the constant neglect and dehumanization of prisoners. These inmates are still people, people who have made terrible mistakes, terrible choices and when we allow these dehumanizing acts to take place on these prisoners, how are we different from the criminals most people think deserve to be imprisoned. If we apply the presented solutions than this issue can finally be resolved.

AnotateBIB:

Ptacin, Mira. "Guards vs. Inmates: Mistreatment and Abuse in the US Prison System." *Guards vs. Inmates: Mistreatment and Abuse in the US Prison System (In Partnership with Starz from VICE Media)*, Vice, partners.vice.com/starz/starzpowers4/news/guards-vs-inmates-mistreatment-and-abuse-in-the-us-prison-system/.

Writer: Mira Ptacin is the 2017 recipient of the Maine Literary Award, the author of the memoir *Poor Your Soul* and the forthcoming book *The In-Betweens*. She teaches memoir writing at the Maine Correctional Center in Windham, ME, and lives on Peaks Island.

Source:

Purpose: I plan on using this source as evidence explaining how there inmates going through mistreatments in U.S. prisons.

Precis: This article basically talks about the mistreatment and abuse most inmates have gone through in many prisons located in the U.S. It also shows statistics of the abuse these prisoners have gone through.

Reflection: The article provides a lot of detailed information about the harsh treatment of prisoners around u.ss prisons, useful information I can include in my writing to help support my

claim. This article provides statistics focusing on the number of reported abuse in prisons located in u.s., I find this to be very useful.

Cason, Mike. "DOJ Says Alabama Prisons Likely in Violation of Constitution." *Al.com*, Al.com, 3 Apr. 2019,

www.al.com/news/2019/04/doj-says-alabama-prisons-likely-in-violation-of-constitution.html.

Writer: Mike Cason is a state government reporter for AL.com and Alabama Media Group, which includes The Birmingham News, The Huntsville Times and the Press-Register.

Source: The DOJ concluded that there is reasonable cause to believe that conditions in men's prisons violate the Eighth Amendment because of a failure to protect prisoners from prisoner-on-prisoner violence and prisoner-on-prisoner sexual abuse, and a failure to provide prisoners with safe conditions. The report said Alabama prisons have the highest homicide rate in the nation and that violence has increased dramatically in the last five and a half years.

Purpose: This source talks about how the prison, located in Alabama, violates the eighth amendment, more specifically the part in which no cruel and unusual punishment is not allowed.

I will use this source as an example of a U.S. prison that mistreats and abuses their prisoners.

Precis: This article focuses on the cruel and unjustified treatment of the inmates in a prison located in Alabama. The article talks about how these prisoners are not protected from other prisoners and how they intern are sexually abused and violently beaten and sometimes killed.

Reflection: This article provides me with a great example of the problems occurring in most of the prisons located in the United States. It's also a pretty recent article which also shows how this is a problem that is currently ongoing.