

# Placing criminals in prison benefits everyone

[Law](#), [Criminology](#)



In early times, prisons served an entirely different purpose from the one it does today. While it was basically still for the enforcement of the law, it was used as a holding area for people accused of crimes and in the process of trial, and for those accused of lesser crimes as non-payment of debts. Back then, the only two penalties for crimes were death and banishment.

Over the years, imprisonment for crimes has considerably changed. The cause for imprisonment and the conditions of prisons have changed depending on the norms and capability of societies. However, there still stands one common reason for imprisonment of persons convicted of crimes and that is basically to keep them away from society. It is for the purpose of keeping the public safe from criminal elements such as them and to prevent them from committing crimes again.

There are four major social benefits of incarceration that must be considered in measuring the cost effectiveness of imprisonment: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation or incapacitation. (Catherine Bucci, 2005).

Society believes that offenders must be penalized. This belief is as old as time. The difference is the penalties imposed on crimes, which are markedly different from society to society, from era to era. Serving time in prison is the convicts' retribution for the crime they committed. Putting criminals behind bars serves to warn others of similar fate and hopefully prevent them from committing crimes also. Imprisonment of convicts is a deterrent to potential criminals. While serving time in prison, the convict may receive intervention to curb criminal mentality. They are made to do activities that will take their minds off from their negative side and bring out the positive in them. While in prison the criminal is not able to commit crime under the

watch of law enforcement agents. All these ultimately benefit society as they all focus on the control and prevention of crime.

There are four morally justified purposes for punishment. (Ryan Kummamer, 2007).

**To Protect Society.** Imprisonment will keep the offender away from the public. This is to ensure that the public will be safe and protected from further threats from criminals. Society is assured that the criminal is under police custody and could do no harm again. If the criminals are allowed to roam the streets unchecked and uncontrolled they pose a great threat to the peace and order of the community.

**To Reform the Offender.** Prisons are not just penitentiaries but also reformatory institutions. While serving time, convicts are provided with opportunities that will help them to be contributing and productive members of society when they are released from prison. These opportunities are made available to them through skills training and rehabilitation and therapy sessions. If prison changed the offenders, it will be a better and welcomed change.

**As a Deterrent to Potential Criminals.** The threat of imprisonment and serving long prison term should serve as a strong warning to potential criminals. The threat which brings fear deters persons from committing crimes that would surely send them to jail. Studies even show that a prison term is more feared than the death penalty. This reinforces the assumption that imprisonment is an effective deterrent for potential offenders to keep away from committing crimes.

Penalty and Pay Back. Justice calls for penalty to be imposed for the commission of crime. An offender commits a crime for which society wants him to pay. The penalty of imprisonment serves as the punishment. Imprisonment brings back order, paying back of what was taken away or restoration to the proper order and condition of a community before the incident of crime. When the offender is put behind bars, a sense of peace once more prevails in the community that once was shaken by the crime.

All four reasons justified the means to an end. Imprisonment will have served its purpose if in the end, a reformed convict integrates to mainstream society and does not turn into a recidivist.

There are several basic theories regarding criminal justice and its relation to individual rights and social control; Restorative Justice, Retributive Justice, and Transformative Justice. (Raymond E. Foster, 2006, 2007).

Imprisonment is likewise justified if the ends of justice were met and served.

Restoration. Justice calls for the restoration of what has been taken away from society because of the crime committed. At times there were chaos, anger, disruption from normalcy and confusion. When a criminal is confined in prison, he is taken away from the community. This becomes the time for the community to pick up the pieces to start over. The condition of the community before the incidence of the crime is brought back.

Retribution. The offender suffers what the victims had in essence suffered as well. Since time in memorial, every part in history made offenders pay up for the crimes against persons, society and humanity. This age is no different, so that people would realize that crime definitely pays.

Transformation. Everybody deserves second chances, including convicts serving prison terms. Their confinement in penal institutions must bring something good and purposeful. Convicts are given the means to reform within the walls of prison. When they are released they are hoped to become changed from the criminal that was committed to the facility to a reformed person who would re-join society.

Today, unlike in the 50's when families provide the backbone of society, many factors like broken homes cause the high incidence of crimes. Without strong societal support and an equally effective criminal justice system crimes would be hard to control. Given all the avenues to pursue criminal justice, deterrence must still be the first measure sought. Deterrence from the commission of crimes is effective to fight crime. If there is a big threat to criminals like fear of being incarcerated, that would be deterrence enough to prevent further commission of crimes.

The recorded low crime rate in the 80's up to the 90's has been due mainly to the high possibility of prison sentence and increased prison time for serious offenses. Legislation to these ends had a big impact on the downward trend of crime rate. Laws raised the odds of imprisonment and made crimes unattractive to would-be criminals.

Imprisonment is a more acceptable option to a society that frowns upon capital punishment. Church groups, civil society and human rights advocates are all against the death penalty. In many other countries, they deplore the conditions of jails as unfit for humans giving due concern over the rights of accused. These groups tend to see the other end of the scales of justice. However, prison conditions and intervention approach done

and extended to convicts serving time make imprisonment the just alternative to capital punishment.

Somehow justice must be carried out in a situation where a crime has been committed. The scales of justice must be equally in favor of the perpetrator of the crime and the victim, and society in general.

Imprisonment satisfies all ends of justice. The convict must pay for the crime committed against persons and society. Society in turn demands that justice be served thru commensurate penalty. As penalty for a crime committed, retribution is met. A compassionate society could find it to forgive a convict who has served time in prison for a crime committed. Giving second chances to convicts, reformation is satisfied. Separating the convict from society until he has repented, done time and is deemed ready to re-join society. Public protection is assured. Imprisonment scares people away from crime, then crime prevention is guaranteed.

Sources:

Bucci, Catherine. (09 Jan 2005). Rising Sanctions for Repeat Offender.

Retrieved 17 Jan 2007, from

[http://www.econ.unconn.edu/Bucci\\_internshippaperexample.doc](http://www.econ.unconn.edu/Bucci_internshippaperexample.doc)

Crime Fighters: Justice. (16 Jan 2006). Retrieved 17 Jan 2007, from

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/crime/fighters/prisonservice.shtml>

Prison Reform. (13 Jan 2007). Retrieved 17 Jan 2007, from

[http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison\\_reform](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison_reform)

<https://assignbuster.com/placing-criminals-in-prison-benefits-everyone/>

Crime and Punishment in America: 1999. NCPA Policy Report No. 229. (Oct 1999)

Retrieved 17 Jan 2007, from

<http://www.ncpa.org/studies/s229/s229.html>

Strategic Goal Six: Protect American Society by Providing for the Safe, Secure & Humane

Confinement of Persons in Federal Custody. Retrieved 17 Jan 2007, from

<http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/annualreports/pr2001/Section06.html>

Kummamner, Ryan. (2007). On Capital Punishment. Retrieved 17 Jan 2007, from

<http://www.newcitizenship.net/2006/12/on-capital-punishment.html>

Foster, Raymond E. (2006-2007). Criminal Justice. Retrieved 17 Jan 2007, from

<http://www.hitechcj.com/criminal-justice-degree-online/>