

# Life in prison walls



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Life in Prison Order No. 264218 No. of pages: 2 Premium 6530 Glenn Loury, an economist at the Brown says that “ we are managing losers by confinement.” The losers he refers to here are the prisoners and the confinement is a euphemism for a prison sentence. A person incarcerated for days, months or life, is set to lead a life of despair behind the walls of the prison, where he lives out the sentence for his crime. Prisons impact a nation and its economy, along with the inmate in far greater ways than one can imagine. Sociologist Bruce Weber terms prisons “ engines of inequality”, which not only widens the gap between the rich and poor , but also erodes a person’s self esteem for life .

In order to understand the harsh life of a prisoner one only has to visit the “ tent city” prison in Arizona, run by the sheriff Joe Arapaio. This is one of the harshest prisons in the United States, where 2000 prisoners are held in a permanent canvas compound with a high fence in 130 degree C temperature. All the prison inmates, be they men, women or children are made to clean the city streets, bound in chain gangs and the inadequate meals they get, costs less than 10p per head. Arapaio’s reasons for making the prisoners work in the city are to put them up as potential deterrents for the population.

Ideally the goal of a prison sentence is to make the prisoner pay off his debts to society, which he owes it, due to his unruly behavior, and make him fit to enter society once again. But, like all ideals, this too is far removed from reality. Behind the prison walls, there is a systematic psychological attack on the mind of the punished, whereas they in fact are a “ group...in need of help.”(Pager)

Lawrence Bobo, goes so far as to say that the prison represents a

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normalization of a “ remarkable set of social conditions.” Life in the confines of a prison robs a person of his self-worth and leaves him vulnerable to attacks on his already dulled psyche. Erwin James, who served 20 years in a prison in the United Kingdom says that the humiliation suffered during trial is enough to make a person feel guilty for life and the further humiliation suffered in prison is wholly unnecessary.

Most people feel that our prison systems are not helping much in stopping the escalating crime wave in our countries because something is radically wrong with the system. To serious criminals, the punishment meted out to them would be quite trivial, whereas for the other criminals it would be a nightmarish experience. Small crimes could get off with a fine, but bigger crimes are punished by flogging and other hideous punishments. By the time prisoners serve their sentence and come out once again into society, it is not a guarantee that they would not commit the same crime again. Therefore prisons hardly serve the purpose, in fact due to the number of prisoner that have accumulated over the years, billions of dollars are spent each year by the Government on up keeping the inmates, the people who work at the prisons and for maintenance and medical issues.

## References

Erwin James tells what a life in prison has taught him, in his ...

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