

Ethical treatment of prisoners



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There is much concern over violating individual human rights of prisoners; however, ensuring proper treatment and rehabilitation often comes with a hefty price tag. Many are concerned about rising costs in prison and how that might affect the average American. I will explore two opposing ethical views on the subject of the ethical treatment of prisoners in the U. S. And follow by including my own personal opinion on the topic. Initially, the use of " long-term imprisonment as the primary punishment for convicted criminals began in the United States.

In the late eighteenth century, the nonviolent Quakers in Pennsylvania reposed long-term confinement as an alternative to capital punishment" (West's Encyclopedia of American Law. 2005). This prevented Quakers from committing a sin of killing someone who may have been innocent of their accused crimes. A long time has passed since the first American prisons; technology has advanced by leaps and bounds making the chances of convicting an innocent person far less likely than in the late eighteenth century.

If the original use of prisons were to protect citizens from sin what is the purpose of prison now? By asking the question of what purpose orison is supposed to serve we are using the demonology approach to ethics.

According to the demonology theory which states we must " looks at the reason for which an act is done, and the rule according to which one chooses to act" (Moser, 2010). Demonology doesn't deny that acts have consequences; rather, it insists that those consequences should not play a role in our moral evaluation of such acts" (Moser, 2010).

The reason we imprison our criminals will determine how we should treat them. To this to determine what ethical treatment of prisoners in the penal system is we must first identify what the purpose of placing someone in prison s. Is the prison system designed to protect innocent civilians, rehabilitate criminals, and/or punish them? If the sole reason behind imprisonment is protecting our citizens then those who committed violent crimes, especially repeat offenders would probably be incarcerated for life or be submitted to corporal punishment to ensure the safety of our citizens.

Since prison was originally created to ensure innocent people were not killed for a crime they didn't commit, then today capital punishment could be utilized more because technology has allowed our Judicial system to be much more CE tall AT a person's Innocence or guilt Dates on things like peeve surveillance and DNA. However, we can't forget the rights of the prisoners, since they too are citizens. We have to consider the protection of the prisoners and their rights once they are incarcerated because they deserve the same protection that is being provided by locking them up.

If we house individuals who are guilty of non- violent crimes like petty theft and drug use amongst a more dangerous population of murderers and rapists, it would not be very ethical because it places them in danger of becoming victims themselves. This is why it is would be imperative to have different facilities in which to house criminals whose crimes are violent in nature from those who are not.

In addition, protection of prisoners also includes protection from guards who may abuse their power and unnecessarily harm the prison population. While

some believe prison is meant to protect the population others might say the sole purpose is to punish those who committed the crimes. Making prison sentences a punishment for crimes could help deter individuals from becoming repeat offenders in the future for fear of going back to an unfavorable taxation.

Some prisons like ADS Florence, a super maximum facility in Colorado like to impose 23 hours a day of solitary confinement and no natural sunlight as a way to psychologically breakdown prisoners (West's Encyclopedia of American Law, 2005). In addition to solitary confinement, other punishments which could be imposed would be limiting food, yard time, and leisure activities such as reading. In addition to prison being punishment, it can also be viewed as a way to rehabilitate criminals into productive members of society.

Whether rehabilitation comes from being sent to a facility for mental illness to receiving medical attention or prisoners receiving an education and training to ensure their success once they are released, these kinds of programs provide prisoners with hope for the future while giving them experience and education to help them reintegrate successfully once they have completed their sentence. For some, the purpose of prison is to do a combination of protection, rehabilitation, and punishment.

One example of this is Mauricio County Jail ran by Sheriff Joe Repair, where conditions are less than comfortable, inmates live in tents and there is no coffee available since it has no nutritional value. This is all in an effort to not only punish the prisoners but also save the county lots of money, by taking

away coffee Sheriff Joe saved the county \$150, 000 a year (Hill, 2009).

Sheriff Joe Repair and his posse have been under much scrutiny by the UCLA and other human rights groups because the treatment is considered inhumane, their biggest complaint the tent city where temperatures reach well over 110 degrees.

Sheriff Joey's response to the complaints: " This isn't the Ritz / Carlton. If you don't like it, don't mom 2009). While Rapids tent city gets a lot of scrutiny he does a lot to help rehabilitate the prisoners by providing work opportunities and training to help prisoners adapt upon release (Hill, 2009). No matter how we look at the situation, demonology helps us determine what we might consider ethical treatment of prisoners based on the desired outcome.

Another argument is, as a law abiding citizen I don't want to be raped or murdered so I think individuals guilty of these crimes should be locked away forever, without the possibility of parole to ensure my own safety. This would probably result in a large influx of prisoners which could also be very costly to tax payers. While I want to remain safe I also don't want taxes to increase as a result AT ten AAA t 01 IANAL prisoners. In an e Tort to onset ten cost I would expect things be done to keep costs down.

Such precautions could be taken as feeding prisoners low grade food and only enough of it to keep them nourished. In addition minimal health care would be provided and their care would come from medical students who need the practice to become doctors. Funding for any leisure activities like cable and workout equipment would be cut. Educational programs that are used in places that try to rehabilitate prisoners would be non-existent. And

perhaps to offset some of the costs I would want prisoners to perform long hours of manual labor to "earn their keep" in the prison.

In the event of overcrowding perhaps the most serious offenders can be dealt with using capital punishment rather than locking the up for life. When we only consider what is best for us as an individual we are taking the ethical egoism approach to solving the problem. "Ethical Egoism argues that our moral evaluations should be made in terms of our desires and goals. Something that promotes what I want is regarded as right; something that interferes with what I want, or prevents me from reaching my goals, is regarded as wrong" (Moser, 2010).

In this situation, as a law abiding citizen I want to ensure my own safety but also minimize the effect that safety might have on my pocket book. I personally do not agree with the ethical egoism approach to this issue, it seems the most likely stance in this that would eventually violate prisoners' basic human rights and doesn't seem to address the problem. Just because a convict has been convicted of doing something unethical by societal standards doesn't give society permission to treat them unethically in return.

Mahatma Gandhi once said "an eye for an eye and the whole world goes blind." Being in prison might remove some of your rights as a citizen such as ownership of weapons; however, it does not remove your basic human rights. While they might be criminals they have rights as citizens of my nation, as a result, they deserve the same protection and consideration that everyone else does. I come from more of the demonology standpoint;

however, I think the desired outcome of prison is a combination of protection, punishment and obliteration.

I believe that prison should be to protect not only society from those who are violent and pose a danger to others, but also to protect criminals from each other and themselves. Prison should also feel like a punishment in an effort to deter individuals from being repeat offenders. If prisons offer better accommodations and sustenance than they receive on the outside then prison poses the risk of becoming a welfare system encouraging people to be repeat offenders in an effort to return to a situation where they have a roof over their heads and three square meals a day.

I also believe rehabilitation should be an aspect in Jail for those who can still go on to be released from their sentences and be reintroduced into society. Rehabilitation like education and training in specific trades can help them adapt to life on the outside allowing them to better cope when reintroduced into society. In addition, I believe rehabilitation also gives prisoners something to work towards, a common goal, rather than allowing them idle time to build criminal relationships and reinforce criminal behavior. It will also teach good work ethic which can also aid them upon their release.