

Should prisoners be treated as humans

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Some people believe that once a person commits a crime or breaks the law, they no longer get to exercise their human rights. In fact, they believe that prisoners do not deserve human rights. The treatment of these inmates come into question; especially when most facilities and prisons are overcrowded, receiving more mentally ill prisoners, and female incarceration is on the rise. The problem with some of society is they do not want prisoners to be treated with any common, human decency. They believe inmates have it great by eating healthy and receiving adequate medical care.

Being able to work out and learn new trades for the future has some of society's members upset with paying tax monies for these types of "amenities". I believe that every human has the right to meals and preventive healthcare. People should not have to fear for their safety or health because they have committed a crime. I do not feel they should receive good treatment: punishment should be adequate for the crime committed, but the prisoner should not be in threat of starvation, abusive treatment from other inmates or staff, or fear of medical neglect.

Prisoners are in fact human beings and of course punishment was much worse in ancient times. There would be severe physical punishment, and living conditions while incarcerated were much worse than conditions today. Let's explore some of the treatment of prisoners and the and how they are sometimes affected by this treatment. I believe treating prisoners as you would any other person: with the most basic human rights. This is an ethical dilemma we as society are faced with. The world and the incidents that occur in it are very unpredictable.

There are plenty of people who never expected or thought they would ever become incarcerated. I, personally, was incarcerated from age seventeen to age thirty-three. I have experienced quite a bit of unethical treatment, as well as been a witness to this treatment. There is no self-defense law here in California. I was attacked by a girl with a gun. We fought over this gun and she was shot once in the neck. During the time of the scuffle, she was wanted for an outstanding warrant for the murder of a pregnant woman. I was convicted for attempted murder and sentenced to fourteen years of incarceration as an eighteen year old.

My incarceration was to take place in a California State Prison for Women. Upon my reception to state prison, I have been victim to and witnessed unethical behavior towards the prisoners. With prison overcrowding and an influx off inmates who are mentally ill. There are also the drug offenders. The drug offenders make up a large group of prisoners. There are a variety of ethnicities, backgrounds, and classes of individuals incarcerated. Prison overcrowding contributes to a lot of the unethical treatment of prison inmates. When the prisons are overcrowded, inmates are not segregated amongst other inmates of their same security levels or risks.

Sometimes these conditions make it easy for crimes to be committed within the facility or institution. Many high risk inmates will make victims out of the less violent, vulnerable inmates. The prisoners can become victims of rape, theft, assault, and sometimes murder. Some prisoners have been known to commit suicide because the conditions in prison are too difficult to deal with. To report any crime committee against you while a prisoner, can lead to retaliation from the prison population; terrorizing one with fear.

There is what is called “moral” intuition. According to Mosser (2010), intuition is described as unexplainable feelings a person may have about something being “right” or “wrong”. My intuition tells me it is wrong to treat anyone with inhumane behavior. It is not correct to put an individual in harm way just because they have made a mistake to society. Yes, they should definitely pay the price for whatever crime is committed. Mentally ill persons have also contributed to the prison population. Several inmates really just need to be placed somewhere that can provide the mental help needed to help rehabilitate them. With so few doctors and staff for the mentally ill, it seems rehabilitation is just an illusion.

With mentally ill patients integrated into a prison population, there are bound to be conflicts, as well as abuse. Abuse occurs among the inmates as I have mentioned earlier. Although, half of California’s mental hospitals were closed by the late 1960s, Governor Reagan, during the late 1970s shut down the mental hospitals completely (Torrey, E. F. , M. D. , Kennard, A. D. , Eslinger, D. , Lamb, R. , M. D. , Pavle, J. , 2010). With overcrowding, and barely enough of a budget to care for the health of the inmates, how can a prisoner’s mental hygiene be taken care of?

Most of these prisoners are forced to be confined in solitary confinement. Metzner (2010) states, “The adverse effects of solitary confinement are especially significant for persons with serious mental illness, commonly defined as mental disorder (e. g. , schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder) that is usually characterized by psychotic symptoms and/or significant functional impairments (para. 4). Solitary confinement can

do more harm than good. Inmates may possibly leave prison in a worse state than when they entered prison.

People worry about tax dollars going to prisoner's food and shelter, but if a prisoner can be "corrected" by the department of corrections, that will lower the recidivism rate and less prisoners will return to prison. Earlier, I mentioned drug offenders making up a great deal of the prison population. Some people's addiction does not stop because they are incarcerated. Male officers outnumber female officers by two to one. Male officers make up at least two-thirds of the officers and guards. There are times I have witnessed my cellmate receiving drugs for

sexual favors for the officer. The officer will come at a time when there are no other people around and request these sexual favors. Some guards would even make a girl have sex with them. They would threaten to change the inmate's release date, or cause the inmate to be placed in a position to be caused physical harm by other inmates. These unethical treatments should not be overlooked. Many women are victims of abuse and domestic violence. They have attempted to leave a situation with an abusive partner, and this leads to the homicide of the partner.

Donna Hazley (2010) states, "The same legal system that fails or refuses to protect battered women prosecutes them vigorously when they fight back (para. 11). There are also women incarcerated with hopes of returning to society as a rehabilitated individual, and return to caring for their families. Not all people that are incarcerated always lose custodial rights of their children. They hope to return to care for these children. These children

deserve a chance, if it is possible to rehabilitate their parents. Not everyone serving a prison sentence is an outcast, monster, or society's reject.

These are human people with human feelings, and emotions. Again, I say no one should be subjected to these treatments because they have committed a crime. No one can truly know the remorse a person feels for the things they have done wrong, and therefore, should not impose upon them abuse. In approaching this issue of the unethical treatment of prisoners, I believe the classical theory of deontology could resolve this issue. Deontology is described as looking at the reason the act was committed instead of the consequences of an act (Mosser, 2010).

It is a deontologist's position that we treat everyone with respect, and consider each human being's dignity when dealing with them. If it is considered why a woman has committed a violent crime against her spouse, then maybe she can be treated with ethical treatment, instead of what one feels is much deserved abuse because she is a prisoner. According to an article by the Human's Rights Watch, A video tape at a California state facility showed two officers severely beating and kicking two inmates (2004). Deontologists theorize that no one should be beaten and kicked for no reason. It is unethical to treat a person with such excessive force.

Virtue ethics is also an approach that can be taken to resolve the issue I have presented of unethical behavior of prisoners. Virtue ethics focuses more on the character of the person performing the act (Mosser, 2010). If we paid attention to the individual that performed the crime, we may better understand a way to effectively deal with the person without imposing any abuse upon the individual. Utilitarian's ethical approach is basing a decision

on the best outcome for the greater number (Mosser, 2010). It is likely to be beneficial to society to treat prisoners with common human rights, and not subject them to inhumane behavior.

If people can rehabilitate, instead of become at risk for mental issues, high recidivism, and absence from the family, society will benefit as a whole. There will not be the need to spend so many tax dollars on prisons because so many prisons will not be needed. Families will be united and given the tools necessary to prosper and benefit, having a positive effect on children being raised with their parents. The problem with the deontologist's theory is that a relativist will say that it is not their problem to concern themselves with how prisoners are being treated.

Relativism is the values regarded by an individual based on their own ethical standards; usually based on their background and culture (Mosser, 2010). One will argue that it is what prisoners deserve because that is just what they believe. It may be acceptable in someone's society to mistreat prisoners and the mistreatment not be considered unethical. Emotivism suggests that moral claims express an emotional response or attitude (Mosser, 2010). Mostly, people feel as if prisoners deserve unfair treatment. In fact, people feel as if they don't deserve to be treated as human beings at all.

Emotivism can reduce our moral judgment to something so simple like an emotional response; we may be robbing someone of a fair ethical decision. In my opinion, this can cause harm to the greater number of individuals effected by the decision, thus, presenting a challenge to the issue of utilitarianism. In this case the moral issue will not be examined because it is being responded to in an emotional way. Virtue ethics, I remind you, focuses

on the virtues of the person performing the act. It is not an easy thing to do, trying to determine why a person made a certain choice.

This person or group of individuals could have made this choice for a number of reasons. Sometimes, it is much more apparent why a person or group has done something. Other times, it is not. Ethical egoism can be the challenge to virtue ethics. Ethical egoism argues that our moral decisions should be based on our desires and goals (Mosser, 2010). Our personal goals and desires are what motivate us make many of the decisions we make in our lives. If an outcome does not appeal to our goals and desires, we tend to find a way to dispute that.

Finding a person's virtue may conflict with our personal goals and desires. A person may have been robbed once before, and now has a bias toward anyone that has committed a crime, regardless of their motivation to commit the offense. If the victim's personal desire is to see any person who commits theft to "rot" in prison, they will not consider the virtue ethics of a prisoner, therefore, the unethical treatment of prisoners seeming completely ethical to the ethical egoist. Having served so much time in prison, deontology is the closest view to my own.

I believe that every action has a consequence and people need to suffer a consequence when they have broken the law. Respecting this theory, I still believe that everyone should be treated with respect and human decency. Although, I shot the young lady in the struggle over the gun, she was already wanted and convicted of murder. I feared for my life, as well as did not intend to cause great bodily injury; otherwise, I would have shot her repeatedly. Finances and social class had a lot to do with my conviction. I

<https://assignbuster.com/should-prisoners-be-treated-as-humans/>

was unable to afford the best attorney and I was what was considered “ at-risk” urban youth.

Society did not care about the reason the victim ended up shot once. It was argued by strangers who did not know me that I deserved to serve fourteen years, and maybe even deserved to be shot myself. Either way, I am a decent human being, who wanted nothing other than to reintegrate into society and make a positive life for myself. People could never understand that unless they have been in prison, or have a family member who has spent time in prison. There are people who deserve to be treated fairly no matter whether they have committed a crime or not.

I am sure I can benefit from therapy. It feels as if sometimes, I am suffering from post-traumatic stress. I feel I didn't deserve to receive some of the abuse that I have fallen victim to. Inhumane treatment in prisons should be investigated. Society should take time to weigh all the issues and realize heinous crimes are committed and one absolutely should pay their debt to society, but never at the cost of their basic human rights. “ All persons deprived of liberty shall be treated at all times with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person”, (OHCHR, 2005).