

Can criminals be rehabilitated essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Jacoby Davis March 25, 2009 Avid2A Easter, Mitchell " Can Criminals Be Rehabilitated? " The USA has a higher percentage of its citizens behind bars than any other nation.

Our crime rate is higher than that of any other advanced nation. Among the leading industrialized nations our murder rate is 3-1/2 times higher than the second place nation, Italy. The majority of persons released from prison in the US- estimates run as high as 70%- are convicted of new crimes within five years. These are statistics that are very real. My purpose is to research and determine if a convicted criminal can be rehabilitated. We will take this opportunity to further delve into the controversial world of rehabilitation for the " outcast dredges" of our society. You will read many ideas ranging from scholarly to just plain nutty, as to why the greatest nation on earth can have such a great crime problem. Unfortunately throughout my research I found that too few of these ideas are actually based on research, fact, or implementation.

Too many are based on human emotions. Many of our decision-makers seem to believe that learning from the policies and experiences of other nations is somehow beneath us. All too often youth offenders are arrested and released too many times. Our sentencing policies are inconsistent, often too lenient for violent crimes and too harsh for non-violent crimes. Our public safety planning is too shortsighted. It would be better to spend more on intensive probation and scientifically based rehabilitation programs now, and less on more and bigger prisons tomorrow. We make " convicted felons" an untouchable class, locking them out of normal society and worthwhile employment, making continued crime all the more attractive. Instead of

<https://assignbuster.com/can-criminals-be-rehabilitated-essay/>

facilitating prisoner re-entry, we strain to make it difficult and almost impossible for some.

More often than not no real intervention until criminality is firmly established and has become a pervasive lifestyle. Too many people including decision-makers believe “rehabilitation doesn’t work” although research proves otherwise! Or does it? My purpose is to find out what individuals say about Educational Rehabilitation vs. Faith-Based Rehabilitation methods, if it actually works on offenders and whose responsibility is it to ensure that the programs that are implemented are actually carried out by the criminals.

What is Rehabilitation? Rehabilitation means to restore to useful life, as through therapy and education or to restore to good condition, operation, or capacity. [i] The assumption of rehabilitation is that people are not natively criminal and that it is possible to restore a criminal to a useful life, to a life in which they contribute to themselves and to society. Rather than punishing the harm out of a criminal, rehabilitation would seek, by means of education or therapy, to bring a criminal into a more normal state of mind, or into an attitude which would be helpful to society, rather than be harmful to society. The two types of rehabilitation that we would address for our purposes are educational and spiritual. Educational Rehabilitation What specifically are the factors which cause crime? What in our present society is causing such decay? Some point to drugs as the primary cause for the rise in crime.

According to Justice Department statistician Allen Beck, drug offenders currently account for nearly 60% of all inmates, as opposed to 25% in 1980. And even more specifically, nearly every inmate in jails across America has

used drugs extensively either at some point in the past or during the actual commission of the crime. The surprise with this matter is that there are no nationally sanctioned drug treatment programs in the prisons themselves, and conversely, it is sometimes easier for inmates to get drugs within prison walls than it is to get food.

Still others point to a problem that could very well be the cause of both crime and drug use: illiteracy and a failing educational system. In fact, one study from an internationally known drug rehabilitation center concluded that nearly every drug abuser in its care began such behavior immediately after a failure to learn in school. Another report from the National Institute of Justice claimed that illiteracy was the primary cause of crime. And it's no wonder; if one cannot learn, where can he or she turn in order to survive? A recent study of juvenile offenders placed them, on average, at a third grade reading level. Jobs were simply not an option; they simply did not have, and could not learn, the necessary skills. And thus they were absorbed into the gangs, and the attendant drugs and crime.

Higher education in penitentiaries used to be ordinary, but in 1994 Congress eliminated federal funding for inmates to go to college and many programs were abolished. The reasons were: why should the government give free college educations to inmates when there are so many unconvicted students who cannot afford it? One of the best ways to rehabilitate criminals is through educating them while they are in prison, but most people do not want to pay for prisoners to go to college when even they have trouble coming up with money for their own kid's education. We're hung up on

solving problems by “ Getting Tough” and place too little value on “ Getting Smart. ” Not only must we educate the prisoners, we must also take the time to educate the police officers.

We must begin this educational rehabilitation process by rating the prisons the same way we rate our schools: By their success rate. Success is measured by the percentage of released prisoners who are not charged with new crimes within a year, and again within two years. Yes we would need to control for such factors as age, past record, and expected recidivism rates for the type of crimes each was convicted of. This should be relatively easy in this computer ages. This would encourage prison administrations to develop and promote job training, anger management classes, release preparation programs, education, and other interventions known to reduce recidivism.

We should put young offenders in responsible citizenship classes. This can be self-supporting with fees paid by the offender or his or her family, with provisions for those who cannot afford to pay anything. Education of these young offenders will hinder them from laughing off and bragging about that first arrest! For those individuals that say that this is too much trouble, they should think about how much more trouble it is to arrest, try, and incarcerate many of those same young offenders a few years down the road. One stellar example of criminals receiving educational rehabilitation is the program that has been implemented at the Eastern Correctional Facility, a maximum security prison. Most inmates incarcerated at this facility ended up there because they committed various crimes such as assault, rape, and murder.

These are not the individuals that mainstream society believes are capable of pursuing higher levels of education.

And yet, the program implemented by Bard College has been in existence in excess of 6 years and is working relatively well. The Bard College program is a privately funded Liberal Arts College. You wouldn't expect to see such hardened individuals (as society claims) working towards their Masters or PH. D. One inmate specifically said that the academics are extremely rigorous and he must study a minimum of 6 to 7 hours a day outside of the work that he puts in, in the classroom.

The classes that these inmates take change each semester, however what they have in common are that they are not the practical classes that you see introduced commonly. The classes that are offered are English, sociology, philosophy, and German. Many individuals may wonder why teach these types of classes that won't necessarily provide a convicted criminal with the skill set needed to adapt and survive in the world once released. The inmates are all in agreement in saying that they must first be able to understand their behaviors, and where the anger and resentment stems from in order to address their issues, thus changing their attitudes inwardly first and outwardly second. Although vocational training will provide the inmates with the necessary tools and skills required to obtain employment once released, it will ultimately not teach them how to think and give them skills to have a life.

Many believe that's the reason a lot of men are in prison, they are not thinking. They are just reacting. Not every inmate gets to participate in the

Bard College program. They have to apply to the college program and be accepted. There is only about a ten percent acceptance rate, but most inmates jump at the chance to escape their routine, depressing life in the cell to learn. They felt that this is their chance to start their lives over again. In California the focus has always been punishing and warehousing inmates. Recently Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently signed a 7.

9 billion dollar prison construction bill. This Bill was signed with the promise that 37, 000 of the 53, 000 new beds will be built with enough room to house new rehabilitation programs. California's political leaders set benchmarks that if the correctional leaders don't correctly follow through they will immediately be shut down. Although the efforts are admirable there are some very stark shortcomings of the program.

Nearly seven of the ten California inmates paroled from prison are being returned within three years. Their average educational attainment is below the seventh grade educational level. So the questions still remains is Educational Rehabilitation a myth that is something that we here in the United States are unable or unwilling to fully commit to and see to fruition? Or is this something that just is a very unattainable goal that can not be realized amongst the ranks of these individuals who are unable or willing to reform and be rehabilitated. After much research thought and pondering on my part, I believe that Educational Rehabilitation for the criminal sector should not be abandoned. Until we as a country commit ourselves to all individuals and begin from the ground up with the mentality that we must identify, recognize the gaps in our educational system regardless of the

economy status we will continue to raise criminals and warehouse and punish those of our society that either were missed, skipped, or overlooked. Many individuals in our society believe that Educational Rehabilitation is good; however this alone is not enough to reach the people who have fallen prey to the criminal lifestyle. There are those who think that we must introduce Faith into the prison systems to provide them with the foundation that they either never received in their lives or they dismissed as unnecessary, irrelevant, or useless information for their circumstances.

Faith-based prisons are the latest fad in a significant number of state's criminal justice systems. And their growth is an egregious threat to the constitutional democracy, or at least some people seem to think this. These programs are supported by state revenue distributed directly or indirectly to sectarian religious organizations for the goals of rehabilitation and reduction of recidivism. It is a tendency to lapse into a previous pattern of behavior, especially a pattern of criminal habits. In February 2003 an evaluation report of the Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council states: " The program was designed to facilitate the life transformation of the member eliminating the thinking process which resulted in his incarceration and to rebuild the member's value system, establishing a solid foundation for productive growth....

. a three phase program involving prisoners in 16 to 24 months of in-prison biblical programming and 6-12 months of aftercare while on parole. The different program phases focus on biblical education, life skills, community service, leadership and personal faith. Some critics of programs that are faith

based say that these types of programs agenda's are inherently religious. The inmates that participate in these programs are converted into a nonchoice between salvation and damnation that is perceived as a one-way ticket to early release and freedom.

The gut of this widely shared belief is that all secular programs designed to rehabilitate in a therapy model of creating and restoring human relations are doomed to failure. The spread of faith-based prisons is due primarily to the influence of George W. Bush and his twin Jeb Bush. They claim the only way to achieve real rehabilitation of criminals and reduce recidivism is to ' lead them to God.

In April 2004 Florida opened a faith based prison for more than 300 female inmates in the Hillsborough unit in Riverview. The criteria for being acceptance in these faith-based programs contain a contradiction that isn't mentioned, is dismissed as superfluous, or isn't perceived by others. The participants aren't required to profess belief in any God, aren't required to attend any religious courses, but they must articulate a commitment to believing they can be changed. Admitting that a person can be a successful graduate without a belief in a god or attending any religious services deals a death-blow to any form of argument that morality is inseparably linked to religion and that a religious " conversion" is necessary to produce a permanent change in the thinking and conduct of any person. Although Texas and Florida are the leading states in the train of faith-based programs for prison inmates, other states have jumped aboard as well; Georgia, Iowa, Tennessee, Minnesota, Kansas, Maryland, California, and Ohio. Again, this

may seem that this program is the route to take in trying to reduce recidivism among inmates, however I believe that no matter which route is taken it is evident that there must be a movement away from warehousing criminals and locking them up and throwing away the keys.

Too often than not the person that goes into the facility comes out a more aggressive and accomplished criminal than they were before they were sentenced. Until we recognize our failures and realize that these are individuals that may still be able to provide and add positives to our society, we can not possibly hope to rehabilitate them. We must give ourselves the permission to become fully committed and involved, whether it's via the educational route with volunteers, professors, teachers, laymen, or the religious route with pastors, ministers, and churches. We must all recognize that this is a national issue and if we don't recognize it as such we will never become the sophisticated society that we permit the world to believe that we are. ————— Rehabilitation reduces the crime rate? The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology(19673), 73, pp. 1022-1035