

# Why prisons don't work essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In *Why Prisons Don't Work*, Wilbert Rideau takes a powerful and controversial stand in the field of criminology. Rideau, who was a prisoner himself, convicted for murder in 1962, is currently the editor of the Louisiana State Penitentiary Magazine, *The Angolite* and co-editor of *Life Sentences*. Speaking out against the conventional system of keeping prisoners locked up for life sentences and imposing tougher policies, Rideau strongly believes that the entire system must be changed in order to bring about the positive change society desperately needs. According to his observations, most prisoners are young, impulsive, unskilled, and undereducated men who committed crimes out of anger, life failures, and community's rejection. Mainly, the author believes that prisons are not to be treated as complete cures for society's criminal problems and should be utilized as temporary detention and rehabilitation facilities, which teach young offenders to live maturely responsibly. Rideau's claim is credible and comes through experience but he fails to realize that most of his claims have not been proven and society does not truly know criminals will act positively if released earlier.

Throughout the article, it is evident that Rideau has engaged himself in extensive research, which helps him to speak confidently about the problems in prisons. Specifically, he utilizes facts about his own setting, Louisiana State Prison, learning the facts about it in order to build credibility. For example, he informs the reader that Louisiana boasts the highest numbers of murders in the country. This fact draws the reader closer and settles Rideau's claim that in fact, there must be a grave problem with Louisiana Prisons. Moreover, he does not merely complain about the ordeals but offers

practical solutions, which he has concluded after researching and experiencing prison life.

Offering three main solutions, Rideau forces the reader to contemplate their practicalities. The first solution is to release older inmates who are no longer a threat to society in order to save funds and resources at the state level.

That money can be used for creating programs to prevent crimes. Rideau interviewed professionals such as Warden John Whitley who agreed with the solution, thus strengthening his credibility. Secondly, Rideau proposes that young criminals need to be rehabilitated instead of locked up for life.

Through rehabilitation, professionals can inspire change, maturity, and education, giving these youngsters a chance to properly understand society and how to abide by its rules. Lastly, Rideau strongly believes that the government should diligently work to prevent the criminal acts before they happen. He blames politicians for imposing tougher policies and locking up more people instead of providing help because they have hypocritical intentions. Politicians merely aim to rack up statistics for reelection purposes.

Overall, Wilbert Rideau provides a balanced view on the subject, eloquently raising his points to the reader. The strength of the article is the Rideau's qualifications as he has not only experienced life inside the prisons, but is also looking through the lens of those in power, as he holds leadership positions for the news magazines, which allows him to utilize his resources to speak out against the prison injustices. Furthermore, his passion for the issue is blatant as he provides practical solutions, sincerely hoping to aid the inmates unjustly trapped for life. By singling out the true perpetrators,

<https://assignbuster.com/why-prisons-dont-work-essay/>

mainly politicians and policy makers, Rideau is actually attacking society as a whole and questioning its intentions of genuinely aiming to improve and progress. However, Rideau fails to realize that by grouping all criminals together, he cannot gain sympathy from policy changers, as there is much work involved in separating the people who might have changed if given the chance, from those who will repeat doing offenses. The writer does not realize that taking that chance can very well lead to negative results and officials cannot rush into releasing people with criminal pasts solely because the system is corrupted in a few areas.