

Re: OT – I may be in the minority

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.med.transcription/2006-05/msg00664.html>

- *From:* "Eliyahu" <lrooff@xxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 5 May 2006 06:54:43 -0700
-

Karen C. wrote:

Eliyahu wrote:

You're overlooking the fact that it's been decided by the courts and legislatures throughout the land that people are sent to prison as punishment, not for punishment.

No, I'm not overlooking that fact; I just don't think they have made prison to be enough of a deterrent.

The theory of general deterrence has also been throughly discredited. We are already the only western nation whose jails and prisons don't meet the UN standards for prisons, one of only a few democracies to retain the death penalty, we have the highest per-capita rate of incarceration, the largest percentage of our general population under the control of courts and departments of correction, and it hasn't helped much at all. When the entire Arkansas prison system was found to be unconstitutional by federal courts a couple decades ago, they used everything from leather straps for beatings to electrical generators to torture misbehaving prisoners. The court found it to be "a dark and alien world, completely divorced from the free world" and that it still had the highest recidivism rate in the country.

Most of them will eventually be returning to the community. If they've

I think the crime should fit the punishment. Obviously, it doesn't these days. If you're a hard-core murderer or rapist, I just don't think you should be allowed to return to the community. Period.

Re: OT – I may be in the minority

Murderers have the lowest recidivism rate of all crimes. It's generally a "once in a lifetime" thing brought on by the circumstances of the crime and isn't likely to be repeated. And the vast majority of our prisoners aren't in there for rape or murder. They're in prison for drug possession, thefts, domestic assaults and similar stuff.

And the prisons really don't need the return business. We've already got the highest per capita rate of imprisonment in the world.>

IMO, we would have more room if we got tougher on hard-core murderers and rapists and carried through on the death penalty for some of the thousands we have sitting on death row.

IT wouldn't make much room. The bulk of our two million prisoners in the US are there for relatively minor stuff, and they're already serving sentences that are two to eight times as long as those imposed by other western democracies. There's a reason that we're currently spending far more on prisons than we are on education in the US, and it's because we think that we'll be safe if we can only lock up enough people.

BTW, what's a "hard-core murderer"? You could put all the incarcerated serial killers into a fairly small room without them being crowded. When you work with prisoners on a regular basis as I have, you discover that the demonized drooling psychopath, eager to commit more violent crimes, is mostly a creation of the entertainment industry. The average prisoner isn't much different than the average person on the outside other than a few bad decisions in his past.

Eliyahu

.