JUNE 11, 2016 statement

by Casey Brezik

Hmm. I’ve been asked to write something regarding this year’s J11 theme. I have a strong opinion about this year’s theme and am also not a very elegant writer, so I hope not to offend anyone unnecessarily. Please forgive me if I do.

First, I guess, I should state that I’m adamantly against prison reforms for multiple reasons. I don’t want to find myself more comfortable within my confines lest I lose sight of the bigger picture and start feeling as through this place isn’t so bad. I don’t want to fall victim to that illusion for fear of not taking it so seriously. I’ve spent most of my adult life in prison, most of my “free” time has been spent on the streets in a state of abject poverty. Already I’ve done something stupid with the mentality that I was “tough enough” to handle even a life sentence and that’s a fucked up mentality to have. Fucked up and pervasive amongst convicts. After your first trip to prison you’re broken in and almost guaranteed to return having been disillusioned to what it’s really like. Recidivism rates are high for this very reason. We get out and find making an honest living as an ex-felon is extremely difficult, so people rationalize they can get money now and they’re able and if they return to prison so be it. Precisely because prison isn’t that bad!

So, for someone to suggest to make it easier in any regard I think is misled. Instead I’d suggest the best way to undermine the Prison Industrial Complex would be in making the transition for felons back into society easier. In doing so it would give cause for the recidivism rate to lower and ultimately reduce prison overcrowding, perhaps even leaving them empty and obsolete. Except then they’d just make new laws, right? Well, there’s no telling until we get to the point.

So, to sum that up why I’m against reform because of the psychological effects being more comfortable has on its subjects.

Also, I’m against prison reform because of the psychological effect it has on those advocating for it. Something is not always better than nothing. By pushing for reforms you’re lending your vote of support to the prisons. It’s saying, “Yes, they’re necessary, but maybe we can change them a little.” Even if you don’t mean it that way, ultimately that’s what it is. I’m against prison reform because prisons are a despicable thing that should be destroyed, not designed to be more comfortable. Prisons are fucked up. Their very nature is a twist on reality. By adding the state’s discourse to the concept, a further twist on reality, we end up with a huge mindfuck, both for people inside and out. There’s no beating it nor improving it until we’re able to fully accept that they are despicable and should not be there.

Lastly, I was to point out that inmates in segregation...hell, 99% of inmates period, are not anti-authoritarian. They are simply anti-“someone-telling-me-what-to-do.” Not so much against telling or coercing others into doing things. Everyone wants to be top dog. The people you’re supporting with this campaign against solitary and maximum security units are usually regarded as such. Of course, there are exceptions with long-term political prisoners, but there are always exceptions. The general rule of thumb is that if you’re in one of those units it’s because you pose a threat to other inmates, not so much the system in general. That is to say booty bandits for instance, or others that are excessively violent, rarely towards staff.

So for all of these reasons I’m against “the restructuring of the prison system and thus doubling down on opposition to Maximum Security, Isolation, and Communications Management Units.” Well, actually CMUs don’t fall in line with any of my issues. I am definitely against these. I’m also against every aspect of prison, though. But enough of what I’m against. How about what I’m for.

I’m for prisoner support systems. Support is comfort, but comfort from people that care about us rather than people who would rather beat us and look for reasons and excuses to take away what comforts we have. It’s comparable to at least psychological child abuse within these walls. They wish us no good. Some may be indifferent, but there are no well-wishers despite their words. From the outside is where our true comfort comes from. Don’t make us rely on them, nor to think they aren’t so bad. Reforms might be the easiest route, but the easiest route is seldomly the best. The best is destruction. Short of that, find middle ground and at least do no harm. Help support prisoners either on the inside or in their transition back to “society.” Don’t let us suffer this cruelty thinking we’re alone. Please show your support.

Solid.,

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