The Whole Family in Handcuffs

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You might think that the only person affected by the prison term is the prisoner himself. You assume that the family has it easier because they’re still free. But that’s not exactly the case. When the judge sets the sentence, the whole family is placed in handcuffs.

My older brother was sentenced to three years, and he was transferred hundreds of miles away. When I went to visit him, it took 24 hours to get there. It was a long ride to get from Atlanta, Georgia, to the Middle-of-Nowhere, Oklahoma. And then we only had two hours together.

When I saw him, I cried because he was different. The brother that I had known all my life was now much bigger. His face had a hardened look. It seemed like he forgot how to smile. Prison had changed him for the worse.

I’m not justifying the crime committed by anyone. I’m simply suggesting that family shouldn’t feel as though they are in prison too. When I tried to hug my brother, the guards immediately broke us apart. It’s hard enough being away from a loved one without contact but to be pulled away from a hug hurts the most.

Also, we need to be able to talk to our loved one. It’s not enough to have brief phone calls where “I love you” is interrupted by an automated system announcing, “You have one minute left on this call” and then giving you instructions on how you could buy more minutes.

It doesn’t seem like being able to say “I love you” face to face would make a huge difference. But it does. It’s something we did freely before he got sentenced. We could express our feelings. We could say how much it mattered to have a sibling who loved us unconditionally. The love never stops. It just gets harder to express.

Read More about How Prison Affects Families

Read the articles (including the bios.) on pages 7-13.
Write an essay about how incarceration affects families—using these articles as your sources and citing them in endnotes.
Refer to details in people’s stories and use several quotes.