

If It's Broke, Fix It!

No More Mass Incarceration. End Solitary Confinement.

Sterlin Reaves

BEFORE YOU READ: What do we mean by “mass incarceration,” “solitary confinement,” and “reduce recidivism”?

As the election season nears, most of the U.S. electorate is focusing on what the candidates are saying about the economy, health care, and immigration. Here in prison, most of us are paying close attention to where the candidates stand on the two issues that affect us the most: *mass incarceration* and *solitary confinement*. Most prisoners can't vote, so we try to make our voices heard in other ways.



A PDF of “Prisons and Justice” (Issue #40, March 2015) is available online.

a negative impact on communities, particularly in the black and brown communities. Many state and federal penitentiaries in the U.S. are filled with nonviolent offenders. Some of them are drug users or petty dealers who would be better served in treatment programs. All people in prison deserve rehabilitation. Researchers and common sense tell us that sending so many people to prison is not the answer. Our communities would be better served if we offered prisoners rehabilitation and education, both of which

have proven to be the best predictors of future success and the most effective at *reducing recidivism*.

Solitary Confinement: A Form of Torture

I have been a victim of Pennsylvania's abusive use of solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is one of the most detrimental forms of punishment. The United Nations calls it a form of torture. In whose mind is it productive to leave people languishing in 7'x12' cells for 23-24 hours a day with little access to educational or psychological services and no opportunities to socialize? According to Solitary Watch, a non-profit that studies the use of solitary confinement, more than 61,000 people are in solitary confinement in the U.S. on any one day. Solitary confinement is so hurtful that many of these people will be worse off when they are released back to society!

All People Deserve Rehabilitation

Incarceration rates are higher in the U.S. than almost any other country. Mass incarceration has

I Hope You Vote!

Over the past few years, there have been some efforts to reduce the prison population and cut back on long-term solitary confinement. As someone who has been in prison for nearly at 20 years, I know there is much more work to be done. Excitingly and surprisingly, when I watched the presidential debates, I heard the candidates discussing these issues. Those of you on the outside, who can vote, I hope you vote for candidates who will work to lower the rates of incarceration and outlaw solitary confinement.

AFTER YOU READ: How does the author hope you'll vote? Why?

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Sources: <solitaryconfinement.org/mandela-rules>; <solitarywatch.org/2019/01/04/how-many-people-are-in-solitary-today>.