

Fair Shake News: Barely January Edition

Hello 2020 Fair Shake readers!

Wow ~ I barely squeaked out this newsletter in January! Geez... Where did the month go?

I've mostly been catching up. It seems like I've been catching up since I finished school. In addition to getting the number of corrlinks emails that I need to respond to below 80, I have also been adding information to the Fair Shake website to get ready for the software 'save' coming ASAP. This time, when we do the 'save', we will also build a "secure website" – where the 15,500 links that I have are removed - so that prisons and jails can access it in "real time"...to offer participating institutions the latest resources and other information. This is far from what I do all day at work, of course, but it's a huge project to add to an already very full day. And remember, I do all of this by myself! (except, thankfully, Vern has been helping me respond to questions and comments on Corrlinks!)

New info includes:

Freshman Year Free – Get your first year of higher ed free through a program based on the CLEP exam.

Start studying now and "CLEP out" of courses after release!

State by State SO Restrictions – donated by an incarcerated author, plus a lot more info for this population

More Resources! Cleaning up the directory: many have gone away and many more are being added.

...to name just a few items.

On to the news: **FIRST STEP IS A CRAWL**

According to the DOJ: "In accordance with the First Step Act, all BOP inmates have received an initial assessment using the Justice Department's risk and needs assessment tool known as the Prisoner Assessment Tool Targeting Estimated Risk and Need (PATTERN). Next, "inmates will be assigned to participate in evidence-based recidivism reduction programs and productive activities based on an initial needs assessment." By January 2022, it is anticipated the BOP will begin providing all eligible inmates recidivism reduction programming based on their identified needs. Finally, under "Effective Re-Entry Programming: the BOP launched a "Ready to Work" initiative to connect private employers with inmates nearing release."

And this from a Bloomberg Law article: "Importantly, potentially large categories of inmates will not be eligible to receive earned time credits based on the crime they committed. Earned time credit is not to be confused with "good conduct time." Incentives for privileges will be decided by individual wardens at each institution."

Readers who have shared their experiences have not often been positively impressed.

What do you think? Are these the best ingredients to make a recipe for success? Folks who've been reading this newsletter for some time know that I believe that we are going about this backwards and hence, the 'recidivism rate' will not improve (my proof? consider 20+ years of "evidence-based programming" resulting in an 87% recidivism rate).

What works? Working on goals for success, together!

We often refer to the Scandinavian countries for models of successful reentry. For many reasons, we are very far from implementing them here, not the least of which is our incarceration rate: The US imprisons 655 out of every 100,000 of our citizens, while Denmark (63), Norway (63), Sweden (59) and Finland (51) incarcerate 1/10th, or fewer. But we live in a democracy! How does our number represent who we are? Clearly, we have a lot of work to do.

FLORIDA VOTING NEWS: FL SUPREME COURT IGNORED CITIZEN'S WISHES

From the Tampa Bay Times Editorial Board: "It is no surprise the most conservative Florida Supreme Court in decades has joined Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis and the Republican-controlled Legislature in ignoring the voters' clear intent to automatically restore the voting rights of most felons who have completed their sentences. Amendment 4, approved by more than 5 million voters (64%), was expected to enable roughly 1.4 million felons to automatically regain their voting rights." The Governor and now the state Supreme Court determined they could take the wishes of the citizens into their own hand. Formerly incarcerated people "must pay every nickel they owe in fines, fees, court costs and restitution before their voting rights are restored."

(The above journalism does not reflect the Republican party; only what the Republican party has become. In fact, according to Wikipedia "In 1854 the party supported classical liberalism and opposed the expansion of slavery. Abraham Lincoln was the first Republican president.)

TRUST PIECE

Some folks did not receive the FS News Solstice Reflection edition which included a piece about TRUST. I've included a couple of responses to it below. If you did not receive the Solstice news and would like to, or just the Trust piece, please let me know and I'll resend it - without the author's name - to ensure it gets through. (The reflections have been shortened for space. Sorry writers!)

REVOLVING THE ISSUE OF TRUST

I believe there are two sides to the story; inmates touch on this topic more than people in society. Why? Because we're fighting for equality and rights that were stripped. Rehabilitation in the institution does not exist; it's not forced. The problem is with the programs (pretending) to help us with reentry. Inmates are allowed to volunteer...and I have volunteered for programs that inmates put together. I've talked with people outside who feel incarcerated folks deserve a second chance. Some companies prefer to hire formerly incarcerated because a lot of us are very reliable (probation is very strict) and have given up drugs and smoking while in prison.

I read that "Trust" essay. He is so right. It's healthy to be aware and work on ways to combat (being treated as "untrustworthy"). Reading Trust, reminds me of how many effects Prison has on us - especially for me being incarcerated for 16, with 5 more to go. The first step is being aware. How can you work on something that you don't know? (from his poem included in his response: "I was so consumed with surviving in prison, I forgot how to survive out here.")

I'm desperately searching for some kind of way, to end all this loneliness and pain.
Love, happiness, and a heart filled with joy, are the things I pray to gain.

I've changed myself in so many ways, I feel I have made such improvements;
But the love, the happiness, and a heart filled with joy, they seem to avoid all my movements.

So now I will not give up, I will try once again, to improve the life I have lived;
I will do different things, I will try different ways, to not just exist... But to live.

SERVICE PROVIDERS VS PROMOTING FOR-PROFIT BUSINESSES

Two organizations contacted me recently to ask me to share their info on the FS website/software and in the FS news. I have not added for-profit organizations (except for those who offer reduced rates for low-income participants) to the site for several reasons:

1. as with for-profit prisons, I bristle at the idea of people making money on vulnerable populations
2. they are very hard to evaluate
3. for-profit organizations have advertising budgets, methodologies and strategies to reach potential (and, in this case, captive) customers
4. their focus, like all for-profit businesses, only addresses people with money...which is at the foundation of the problems within our democracy today

I'm aware of the whirlpool that we have all been put in: way too many non-profits work for 'the man' and the status quo, and almost all for-profits work only for, well, profits...yet there are both for-profits and non-profits that are dedicated to working for the betterment of humanity.

To address many reentry trouble spots, I created (and continue to create!) what I believe is the most impactful, egalitarian and efficient 'non-partisan' and 'ownership-oriented' reentry resource in the nation. I felt certain that libertarians and democrats would make donations of \$5 to \$500 to see it fly. I was shocked to find that very few people support free or liberatory (free-ing) information. Many don't want to support people coming home at all (as my dad said to me when I was 13 "you get what you deserve"), much less an organization that supports everyone equally ("you don't help murderers and sex offenders, do you?" - sound familiar?)

But people will 'consume for a cause', which is why I am eager to build the Revolution Wellness Center, to sell products to raise money for Fair Shake.

The organizations that contacted me are a pen pal service and communication service that offers phone, email, greeting card and photo service. They both say they have better (more aware, less expensive) services than their competitors.

If you're interested in receiving their info, please email me by STARTING A NEW EMAIL with the subject – SERVICES – and I will send you their info. (If you hit 'reply' to this email, the info will not be forthcoming.)

ANOTHER NOTE ON FREEDOM POTENTIAL FACTORS

New comment: There are a number of ways that anybody in my circumstances can feel a level of freedom. This is why I believe that these should be called Freedom Participation Factors.

The lack of participating in such factors of freedom tends to have individuals led down a dark path of negativity and unreadiness for release back into society. We need to keep ourselves accountable and participate in as many freedom factors as possible. These should be called Freedom PARTICIPATION Factors because participating in them gives us freedom. Thoughts?

Book Review: THE MEANING OF LIFE: THE CASE FOR ABOLISHING LIFE SENTENCES
by Marc Mauer, Exec. Director of the Sentencing Project, and Ashley Nellis

I have to be straight with you: I have not yet read this book. I feel compelled to recommend it, however, as several readers have shared their enthusiasm about the book with me. Kirkus reviews: The authors argue that prison sentences longer than 20 years have "diminishing returns," with few moral or practical

justifications. They outline recommendations for a “full recalibration of the American sentencing structure” and a prison system-wide overhaul that they believe will increase overall public safety. This book is convincingly and meticulously researched while also balanced in its acknowledgement that the issue remains complex and highly controversial. Readers on both sides of the argument will surely find this book fodder for inspired debate and proactive discussion. From the authors: “Ending life imprisonment would constitute a major step toward making us a more just and humane society.”

Quotes

“The most important skill to learn is how to learn. The most important subject of all is simply helping people learn how to learn, to develop the ability to develop, to increase their capacity for growth.” ~ Mark Manson

“Don't let someone dim your light simply because it's shining in their eyes.” ~ Jessica Ainscough

“Experience is not what happens to you, it's what you do with what happens to you.” ~ Aldous Huxley

“Our ability to forge deep relationships – to love, to care, to hope, to trust and to build voluntary communities based on shared values – is one of the most uniquely human capacities we have.” ~ Dov Seidman

“Listen, learn and read good books to gain more ways to manage uncomfortable feelings.” ~ Jesus Garcia

The purpose of education - is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions. ~ James Baldwin

“The right to development is the measure of the respect of all other human rights. That should be our aim: a situation in which all individuals are enabled to maximize their potential, and to contribute to the evolution of society as a whole.” ~ Kofi Annan

“Integrity, intelligence, and energy. If you don't have integrity, forget the other two.” ~ Warren Buffett

And my favorite: “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” ~ :)
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thank you, Donors, for making this newsletter possible for 2679 incarcerated readers!

Thank you, Readers, for sharing your voices with me so I can share them here. It is as close to a national discussion - that includes both state and federal folks - as we can get right now. It's a pretty good start!

To our successful transitions ~
Ubuntu! ~ sue

Fair Shake
PO Box 63
Westby, WI 54667

As always, remember to look up free support in your phone-gizmo:
2-1-1
Rzero.org
Fairshake.net
HelpYourselfTherapy.com

