Ali Osman

Professor Mangini

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Prisoners modern day slaves in America

As of 2010 the U.S census counts 2.3 million people are in prison (Starr1). That is the most among all developed countries. Among those 2.3 million prisoners the job training program “employs” 13,000 prisoners to work for private companies and government-owned companies (Starr 2). They make item that range from name brand clothing to office supplies to military equipment. However, you would think this program was of much benefit for these inmates. Instead, these prisoners are being mistreated due to their status. They are a products or slaves of the modern day justice system. What is slavery defined as you ask? I was recently listening to a podcast where an individual by the name of Andres Resendez defined slavery in four ways. First, forcing people from their homes (Vedantam1). Second, not allowing those people to leave their place of work (Vedamtam2). In other words these people are stuck at work. Third, the use of violence to maintain order (Vedamtam3). Finally, the payment they receive. Which would either nothing or a very small amount (Vedamtam4). Unsurprisingly enough prisoners fit the description of a modern day slaves.

When these individuals go commit a crime and get charged from said crime they are striped of their freedom.They can no longer go head to the safety of their home. They are forced to live in an isolated prison complexes housing some of society's most dangerous people as a punishment for their crimes. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which are the psychological needs of humans, states that people need five things in life which includes safety (Mcleod 1). However, they are constantly having to worry about their safety day in and day out. Imagine being locked up in your cell by guards around 8pm every night and woken up at 3am everyday (24 Hours 1). Imagine only being out of your cell to eat or one hour out on the yard for recreation time/work (24 Hours 1). There is no sense of comfort and safety like one would have in their own home. Why should a prisoner be comfort one might ask. They have committed an unlawful act so they should be punished. Even though they are being punished why should a person be striped away from their rights such as making decisions like going outside for some fresh air, exercising outdoors, etc. No one wants to be taken away from their loved ones and being told what to do 24/7. You can see the resemblance in slaves in that they were forcibly taken from their homes and put in a controlled environment.

While at working,we as free people, get to clock out, go home, and destress. On the other hand, prisoners are stuck in their place of work. After a hard day’s work they are placed back in their small cell until they are woken up again in the morning. Everyday prisoners are woken up and fallen asleep to a dark, small cell instead of a spouse or a loved one. Another of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is the need for love and belonging (Mcleod 2). One inmates goes far enough to say “ I wanted to sleep all the time. I wanted to escape my pain.” (Prison Fellowship 1). The feeling of loneliness starts to cloud over the inmates after a little while. Similar to slaves, prisoners are forced to sleep, live, stay in their place of work. Even though the average law abiding citizen might think this is an appropriate punishment; they are sadly mistaken. The fact that the individual doesn’t have that belongingness causes sadness and even depression. This is a serious mental disorder that leads to lifelong consequences including loss of interest in things as well as even suicide. You, as a human, would never want anyone to feel lonely or even suicidal. The reality for this prisoners is that they have to face the fact that they can’t leave just like slaves weren’t permitted to leave their workplace. Also, to make matters worse violence is used to keep these inmates in “order”.

A 2015 report by Human Rights Watch showed that guards were responsible for breaking the jaws, noses, ribs of inmates (Ptacin 1). In addition they were responsible for internal organ damage too (Ptacin 2). Not only did prisoners have to worry about attacks from other inmates, but now they also have to worry abuse from guards. For instance, one inmate residing in an a Louisiana prison explains that on his way to administrative lockdown; he was beaten by a guards (Evans1) . He was punched in his mouth, eyes, and stomach while the other guard held him. Surprisingly, the supervisor on duty watched this all happen and did absolutely nothing. On another occasion guards at Cook County were found to have beaten 5 inmates while shackled to show them that the guards run the place (Possley 1). In other the guards used force to show dominance and keep order. Slaves were beaten their owners with whips in order to stay on track or follow orders (Kanopiadmin 1). Similar to those prisoners who are beaten to make sure they follow the orders of the guards. Since much of this abuse is not documented these guards get away with these heinous actions. Absolutely no one should be beaten to keep them in line or follow rules. This abuse leads to violence and mental issues. How can you expect an inmate to respond to being attacked by the ones who are suppose to protect them?

Finally, payment for the work they do. Ninety-two cents an hour. That’s on average how much a prisoners make when working under the job training program (Starr1). These inmates are tasked to perform jobs such as making items that varied from office supplies to mattresses to even houses (Starr 2). Prisoners are offered jobs within the prison to make money or avoid staying in their cell. It seems like nothing is wrong, right? Wrong, these prisoners are being overworked and either given no payment or a little amount. During one of my classes we got the opportunity to watch a film called “Where to invade next” ; It partly discussed how some inmates are used by prisons to make products such as clothing for JC Pennny or bookbags for Jansport (Moore 1). Those companies benefit as they only pay these inmates as little as 23 cents an hour which is significantly cheaper than the $12 ordinary workers would make. Slaves weren’t given the opportunity to be paid for their work. They were a place to sleep and food to eat even if the conditions were below adequate. The same could be said about prisoners in Texas, Arkansas, and Georgia as they are not allowed to be paid for any of their work ( Modern 1). Not one single individual would be able to survive off the little to no funds they get for their work. Why should inmates have to indore this? They are human just like we are.

They force a person out of their home or force them to stay in their workplace or use violence to to maintain “order’ or even pay them little to nothing for their work. Why haven’t we taken actions to stop America’s version this modern day slavery of prisoners? Instead of helping these inmates rehabilitate for whatever reason the prison system is using them for their benefit. Instead of treating them in such an unpleasant manner why not make them productive humans in society? Why not teach them these life skills such as how to make a house or fix a device? The given salary they get for their work isn’t adequate. I have an idea. Look into paying them more than the measly 23 cents or if lucky 92 cents. The money they make from working in prison should be given to them so when they leave prison they have money to start their lives over again. In addition, they could use the craft they learn in prison to find jobs and be productive members of society. This will not possible until we start to take actions. Action against those companies, guards, and current the prison system.