Prison’s program is an exemplary model of restorative justice

Updated August 18, 2022, 2:15 a.m.

Tim Deal, who got out of prison in July 2021, said he makes sure to hug his grandmother Everlena Roberson every day. He recently completed a fellowship at the Transformational Prison Project, a restorative justice organization that was founded in MCI-Norfolk in 2013. CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

I applaud the Globe for highlighting the Transformational Prison Project’s exemplary work (“On the road to redemption, and a new reality,” Page A1, Aug. 7). It might be helpful for those not familiar with restorative justice to explain why those who have
committed crimes need to explore their own traumas. It is not an excuse — it is a first step to true accountability. It is much easier to sincerely accept responsibility for the choice to commit a crime once the influence of past experiences has been acknowledged. Exploring past experiences also helps participants identify causes and patterns of negative behaviors and change them to prevent reoffending.

This self-exploration is only one part of a larger process. In the prison restorative justice program mentioned in the article, participants also examine the impact of their crime on victims and meet with a panel of crime victims. This accountability is missing from our court system, which does not require defendants to acknowledge the harm they have caused.

This approach works. Where restorative justice is used as an alternative to the courts, studies have shown that these programs lead to higher rates of victim satisfaction and lower rates of reoffending.

Adriaan Lanni

Cambridge
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The writer is the Touroff-Glueck Professor of Law at Harvard Law School.

1 Comments

LogicLover 8/18/22 - 7:06AM

Thanks for highlighting this truth. If we actually cared for people in our culture this kind of program would be the norm. As abolitionist/scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore says “where life is precious, life is precious”- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruth_Wilson_Gilmore

We have long known that ACES cause life long physical and mental health issues. Abstract Adverse childhood experiences have been demonstrated to have severe negative consequences on a variety of life outcomes. The adverse childhood experience (ACEs) scale was created to assess childhood maltreatment and has been shown to significantly predict negative life events in adulthood. The definitive study was done in 1988. Our prisons are full of incarcerated folk with ACES high.

The health and safety of all our communities is well served by programs like these. Punishment yields nothing of value.