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From: ERIC RACKARD  
Date: 3/3/2021 6:47:01 AM  
To: Sophie Ordway

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Attachments:

Hi Sophie, okay, I have the questions so I'll get started. As for calling, all that's up to you, I mean what's best for your schedule, so just let me know when you need me to call. Yes, you have my permission to record our phone calls to help with your notes (or whatever you need it for) & I appreciate your asking. Let's get to it shall we?!

1) "--My experience with 'Good Time', T.I.S., ...." I think 'good time' as an idea is past it's prime. For decades now people have used the concept of restoring good time as a political tool for whatever side of the argument you wish to be on, but the truth of the matter is, its not going to happen. Good time was a tool designed to control the behavior & 'flow' of the inmate population in a different era of time & with a different 'breed' of inmates. (By breed I mean the ideas, beliefs, practices, standards, morals, et cetera, of men in prison then versus the men in prison now, & that has a fundamental impact on what's necessary to achieve whatever goal a person is looking to achieve.) All I've seen the concept of restoring good time do, to people who don't have it, is cause false hope to inmates & their families. They wait & hope for the laws to change back to the way they were 20+ years ago, it's a sad situation. As for people who still do have good time, for the most part what good is it really? You can go 10 years without a ticket, have one bad day where you catch an insolence ticket for raising your voice & end up losing 300 days of good time. Besides, the people who still have good time have been in prison for almost at least 25 years, how much of the parole eligible prison population is that, 6%? Most likely they'll be gone within 10 years & so will the term 'good time'. In the end, all things are subject unto change, being evolutionary or extinction level, change will occur. In my opinion, the extinction of 'good time' is necessary so that something that fits the climate of our society better, & meets the modern day needs of our prison population & justice practices, can take its place. For more than 20 years I've watched everyone hold on to the idea of restoring good time, its time to move on to something better

1a) "What is the impact of good time...", well, it used to be a highly motivating factor among the prison population. People could see the other end of incarceration, they could see a future where they could be productive members of society because they understood that how much of that 30-60 year sentence they did behind bars depended solely on their behavior. The thing is, it wasn't just 'good time' by itself that motivated people & that's one of the things people forget about or don't understand. There were jobs that offered a living wage & had meaning, there were more ways for inmates to interact with society & show the brighter side of convicts, there were staff who actually cared (I'll tell you several personal stories if you want later) about you becoming the best version of yourself, there was better food, almost everything inside the prison system was different when good time had a positive effect, & all those things are gone now. You had opportunities to do things you were proud of & with that feeling came a sense of wanting to constantly do better for yourself, family, the people around you. You could make enough money to afford correspondence courses at the various universities & leave out of here with a bachelor's. Staff respected those who sought to better themselves & rewarded those guys & listened to them which made them better officers. All those impactful things are gone now & what you have left is a handful of us old guys getting ready to go & the next generation who aren't going anywhere & don't care about nothing to take our place. (I almost forgot, but it would take our legislators herculean style legislation to bring back good time.)

1b) "The impact of T.I.S." It may be the most destructive piece of legislation the criminal justice system here has seen in 50 years & guys like me played a part in it being passed. Here's the problem with tis, its to broad. What I mean is, it works for low felonies & high misdemeanor, but when you get into crimes that have long indeterminate sentences, then it starts to lose its effect & makes you wonder what the goal actually is? If I'm 19 & break into someone's home when they're gone & have to do 4 flat years in prison, most likely I'm going to mature enough that criminal thinking becomes a thing of the past for me, then tis is effective because it allowed for the offender to rehabilitate & should satisfy the victim's sense of justice. That's what a legal system should be designed to do. If I try to kill a man & have to do 30 flat years at minimum, where does the desire for rehabilitation come in & what number of years of incarceration will satisfy the sense of justice for the man I tried to kill? Here tis fails because rehabilitation is pointless if you're going to age out anyway & no amount of time in prison will ever satisfy the sense of justice for someone you try to kill. There used to be a sense of the crime fitting the punishment & tis has allowed for us to get away from that practice & not have to walk that line anymore. In doing so, we destroy generations of peoples lives because it easier to lock a person away & yell 'public safety', then it is to figure out 'how did that person end up doing that to that person' & how can we help them both. I personally believe in victims rights more than my own because what I did was unnecessary, but tis doesn't do anything to satisfy his sense of justice or impact my desire to be better. Its a strain on or society financially, our families emotionally & everyone physically. (Almost out of characters, so I'm going to send this out & keep working, but I don't know how fast you'll get this, so I'll just email you as I go). Thanks for letting me yap, I hope I can be of some use! Have a pleasant day Sophie :)

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From: ERIC RACKARD
Date: 3/3/2021 3:51:46 PM
To: Sophie Ordway

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1b- continued) As for the prison environment, its a constant state of depression because of Tis. Its an environment full of individuals who are emotional wrecks. You have inmates who have no incentive to confirm to the rules so there's no consideration for other inmates or staff & then you have staff with no leverage to help enforce the rules, except ticket writing which doesn't do anything but ensure we all stay close up under each other all day. You're not going to accomplish anything positive by making a guy stay in his room all day, especially when there's no reason for them to do so. (I think we're at a point where I can't tell you exactly what's taking place without me being censored, so we might have to go over this verbally.)
2) -opposition towards good time...- More than likely the first answer you'll find to this question is public safety. The premise is the longer we keep convicted felons in prison the safer the neighborhoods are. The second answer you'll come across goes towards protecting the victims rights. The third answer would probably be something along the lines of this being a law & order state & must remain tough on crime. All those arguments have been made over the years, but I think the truest reason is, its not a high priority for the majority of citizens. People are content with the way things are until it effects someone they know, so why would the average citizen care that convicted felons don't have a way to shorten their sentences? The perception of locked up equals safety is a great talking point for politicians, why would they want to upset that by truly fighting for criminals? I phrased it that way because that's the way it'll be presented to society. The thing is, if the average citizen could see firsthand how much of a financial impact long term incarceration has on them as taxpayers, they'd be the first ones advocating for change. Clothing, healthcare, food, heat, electricity, housing, those numbers start getting up there real fast, then you factor in staff, nurses, teachers, directors, programmers, equipment, maintenance, all that & show that number to the average citizen as well & ask them how much of their checks go into that for the remainder of their working life, I guarantee there will be little opposition towards goodtime or anything else. So that's the reason there is so much opposition, you'll lose too much public funding & be forced to reform not only the prison system, but your entire justice system & that means cuts in salaries, jobs, benefits, everything. Imagine the amount of money you have spent visiting Rome over the years already, then imagine doing that for 30 years, then multiply that by 20,000 people, you're a customer & your loved ones are the product, in order to keep your customers you have to keep product. Its part of what known as "The Prison Industrial Complex". The people in power understand the financial impact shorter prison terms would have, so there's no true rush or fight to restore good time or anything else. There are other lots of other reason for the opposition, such as population control, legislative representation, we can get into that too if you like. ( Okay, I'm going to send this out & get started on the last few questions for you. Be good & safe, & please Sophie feel free to challenge anything I say, I enjoy intellectual brouhaha-that's not the word I typed but spell correct put it there & its one of my favorites so I left it as is, talk to you later)!

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From: ERIC RACKARD
Date: 3/4/2021 2:08:32 PM
To: Sophie Ordway

Attachments:

Good afternoon Sophie, hope life is treating you & yours kindly. I'm as good as can be, thank you for asking. I'm good with answering your questions jpay style & whenever, if ever, you feel the need to conversate then just let me know :) As for my answering them all at once, I apologize for inundating you but thats just how I am when it comes to things I like & helping others. When I start I keep at it until I've completed the project to the point where there's nothing left to do but fine tune things. If I don't then projects fall by the wayside, I lose my enthusiasm, & people get let down. Not gonna do that to you, so you're going to get my answers & thoughts as soon as possible, so that they're there for you to use them at your convenience, okay :) I do appreciate you informing me that there wasn't a big rush, that was very considerate of you because I didn't know your timeline, so thank you. I just wanted to let you know that it wasn't a problem for me to 'get at it' (for lack of better terminology) because its how I am & I don't have anything else to do. So, here's goes...
2a) -Should we have disciplinary credits,...- I personally feel that there should be some system in place that rewards good behavior & allows for a person to earn time off their sentences. See, the way a country treats its poor, elderly, disenfranchised, prisoners, soldiers, et cetera says a lot about that country as a whole. If you look at how Russia treats their prisoners & then compare that to Australia or better yet Japan, its easy to see the true nature of those countries, & we're no different. You can see the true nature of every state in the United States by the way they treat their prisoners. Compare a state like Delaware's prison system to Michigan's prison system, its embarrassing. (Of course you can argue difference in population, location, whatever, in the end they're both American prison systems & there shouldn't be that sharp of a difference). I feel its necessary because I have a different goal in mind when I think of prisons & the justice system. To me the goal should be to reform & return those who are eligible, & qualify, to society where they can be beneficial members of society instead of detriments & burdens. As for those who aren't eligible & don't qualify, give them the ability to reform by teaching them to teach others through mentorship programs for the insiders. Also, you need to make sure victims of crimes are satisfied with the justice served which is easy enough to do. Explain it to them, tell them what could happen, when it could happen, why it could happen, don't just leave them in the dark with just 'he's going to prison for a very long time', give them all the money they take for "restitution", let the victims have it not the courts. As for earning time off, make it just that, but make it meaningful, where you actually change & not just working the system. For example: If a person has to serve over 7 years for a crime against property, then they can earn time off, if the person has to serve more than 20 years for a violent crime not resulting in death, they can earn time off, if a person is serving more than 30 years or more, they can earn up to 5 years off depending on severity of offense. You earn time off by behaving in prison, taking programs (but the programs have to be available), doing charity work like walkathons, there are all kinds of ways to positively impact the community while earning time off a sentence, you just have to make a path available. Most prisoners aren't just asking for good time to be given to us, we don't have a problem earning it, we're just asking for the opportunity & means to be allowed, that's it, but that's not the argument being presented. Let us earn time off by training dogs, et cetera, basically allow for more prison community interaction. (okay, I'm going to skip question 2c, what changes should be made inside prisons, because that one is a doozy & more than likely will end up getting sensorred & I'll probably have to call you on that one, so I'm going on to question 3).
3) - what's the best way to relay information to prisoner- Emails, but the problem is it'll probably be censored or rejected. Newsletters, but they usually come after the fact, so instead of being a part of something & being able to help, you can read about what others have done. I believe the best way for prisoners to receive information is the telephone. Some type of hotline, but you'll have every prisoner in the state of Mich calling. You'll need to have like a prisoner liaison from each prison or whatever. It can be done & is probably the best way. As for getting information to the public, probably social media posts right? I have a FB (ERICRACKARD08) where I used to do weekly updates & that worked good for awhile, but I quit posting because finding people to "man" it became a hassle. I had a "friend" doing it for awhile but something happened between her & an ex of mine & it just got ridiculous, so I quit. So manning the social.media thing is the only problem I can see, but I'm not qualified with any modern day technology. Alright Sophie, b good & safe, talk to you later!

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From: ERIC RACKARD  
Date: 3/7/2021 3:28:05 PM  
To: Sophie Ordway

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Attachments:

Heh Sophie, hope life is treating you & yours kindly & you're soaking up all the happiness you can! Okay, I'm kind of sad this is the last question, but its been fun while it lasted, so thank you for allowing me to participate. You're study paper is going to be awesome! Anyways, I hope you get this, here we go:

2c) What changes would I like to see inside prison...- I can think of thousands of changes that need to occur, but I'll try to speak about major changes. There's no specific order for these, so I'll start with mental health. The mental health of all staff & inmates should be monitored routinely, not just the people who exhibit abnormal behavior. There should be, at the least, mandatory psychology exams every 6 months for staff & once a year for inmates. It's very clear that many staff members suffer from some form of mental illness, or chemical dependency such as stress, alcoholism, explosive disorders, et cetera, & it has a clear effect on their ability to properly function in their assigned positions. They become irritable & resentful, they bicker amongst themselves, all kinds of inappropriate behavior & then use their authority to harass inmates. This leads to excessive ticket writing & assaults. Staff are not robots & have personal lives that more often than not overlap their work environment. Not only do they carry their personal problems from home to work, but have intimate relationships with one another which also brings about unwarranted strife to everyone. By having outside, independent psychological evaluations, you increase the overall health of staff, as well as their ability to function properly in their positions. That in turn increases the positivity rate among inmates. There is no true downside to having exams if your goal is to create the safest environment possible for everyone. The same is true for inmates, but exams would provide an additional layer of public safety as well. It would provide a truer picture of an inmates mental development over the years & that means when its time for parole interviews, there's something more credible, more functional then just the tickets they caught & the programs they took. You could see what motivates them, what impacts them, how they think, how they are now opposed to back then, all kinds of information becomes available which can ultimately be used to determine the likelihood a person is ready for release. Again, there's no downside to testing depending on what your goal is.

Then there is the grievance process. Its a complete joke. Grievances should be handled by an independent agency, not the people they are filed on, its that simple. That could go under my next opinion, there needs to be an independent oversight committee for the prison system. A group of individuals who call to question the necessity & effectiveness of prison policies, procedures, rules, programs, spending, operational practices, & just basically police the department from top to bottom. It goes back to the old saying "Who watches the watchers?"

"Do Your Job, Know Your Job!" needs to be implemented. Too many people are in positions that they have no understanding or qualifications for, or business being in, while more experienced & qualified individuals are bypassed. This causes resentment among staff & leads to even more operational inefficiency. Its like hiring trump to teach ethics while you have Obama working in the kitchen. That's know your job. Do your job is for all these staff who instead of doing what they were hired to do, find ways to not do it, the mailroom being a prime example. You were hired to search mail, find things that shouldn't be there, et cetera, but instead of doing that, you make up an excuse to damn near eliminate mail altogether. We can't get pictures through the mail, we can't get the original letters through the mail anymore, it makes mail pointless. They say its because the d word is coming in through the mail, which isnt true. With the establishment of email in the prison system, postal mail makes up less than 10% with only about 50% of that coming from family & friends, basically no one really writes anymore. People do still like to send cards & their children's drawings, things like that but they can't do it anymore because the people who are supposed to screen out the bad stuff are not competent enough to do the job, so they just eliminate having to do it by making copies, making things no longer allowable, or rejection. They do so with the premise that the d word comes in through the mail & visits, well the pandemic has exposed that lie because there are just as many d words now as was before, & they only send us copies of mail & no one has been on a visit for more than a year. Want to guess where the majority of the d words come from & have always come from?

Allow us to buy from local companies instead of out of state companies. We buy almost exclusively from retailers outside of the state when there are equally qualified retail outlets in state. If we can order books from Walmart, why not yarn or shoes? Why can we only order from Nasco or Dick Block where we have to pay exuberant amounts of money for shipping & handling & wait months to receive? . Here's something interesting most people don't know about or didn't pay much attention too. When the dept. stopped allowing us & our families to buy personal clothing, two unique things happened. First everybody started looking alike & it became difficult for staff to distinguish who was doing what because we all had on blue hats, shirts, pants, the same jogging pants etc. & that's when they tried putting numbers on clothing but that washed off. Eventually they got cameras everywhere. The second thing to happen was, the dept budget increased by more than 30% because now you had to constantly provide clothing whereas before you didn't have that problem.

Alright Sophie, I'm almost out of characters meaning I talk too much, if you want more let me know be good & safe tata

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