

RECIDIVISM: Has the War on Drugs Evolved Into the War on Recovery From Drugs????????????

By Raymond Jackson

(This is part two of a three part series.)

Recidivism in America is a growing problem; as more and more people become caught in the revolving door of incarceration and drug addiction, many spiritual leaders and organizations have growing concerns on what is the solution, asking themselves, “What are we doing wrong”? “What can we do differently to address this growing rate”? Identifying the core problem can be quite complex, yet simple. An uncaring social attitude, “has nothing to do with me”, if allowed to continue, will create the same results of wars gone by. Can America continue to ignore this dilemma with a wait and see attitude that makes one feel falsely protected and alienated from prisons and drugs? Some say the American Justice system are in cohorts to maintain social compliance while bolstering the multi-trillion dollar prison industry. After all, is not prison building one of the top construction projects in America today?

Many spiritual entities believe they have the key to reform, but access to the participants is very limited. There are many barriers to gaining such access and the continuation of services as well. (As stated in part one of this series). One of the identifiable reasons for legislative disconcern is that the prison manufacturing industry is at an all time high. In addition, cheap labor opps. encourages the Justice

system to look at incarceration as a first option. Is it as simple as just be sure to obey the Laws. Did you know that it is still a written law in the state of Minnesota, that one can be arrested for spitting on the side walk? Nobody is condoning such behavior, but a law!!!

Some feel that the key to Recidivism is extending stays in programs, including halfway housing that on face value is cheaper than long term incarceration.

“In addition to being compassionate, extending the time one can spend in a halfway house saves money and lessens recidivism”, stated Jerry Clark, Founder of WECARE Minnesota.

Others in the business of rehabilitation agree only partially with that concept.

“Currently the state of Minnesota will fund a ninety day in-patient treatment program for those seeking help or ordered to get help. Occasionally a forty-five day extension is granted based on need.” stated Beverly Tugerson, Director and CD Counselor at Micah House, A treatment program which exhibits a success ratio higher than most programs. She continued, “Just like breathing, repetitions lead to natural ability. We encourage our clients to look at the 12 steps from an individual standpoint. Each step has a key component that is vital to positively rebuilding your life. One must be willing to do these steps over and over again and again.” When addressing this problem she exhibits a genuine high level of concern, as she continued,

“Somewhere, the moral values, the spiritual values have been lost. There is a prevailing sense of hopelessness. No sense of grounding, stable peace of mind. This makes people unable to focus, to communicate, and to cope. When

I first started in this profession, one could stay for up to six months, yet the recidivism rate was still unacceptable. I feel strongly that it is what you given in what ever the time period is, and a willingness to stay connected and use those tools on a daily basis, that is key!”

Pastor William Lockett, Executive Director of Micah House and President of Victory Through Faith Inc. stated, “The present day system encourages connecting with individuals, making relationships, then weaning them off of your program towards self-sufficiency and non-dependence on any said program. But it is not about dependency, rather a real connection being made.”

We are interrupted by a phone call to Pastor Lockett from a previous client in need. It was quite fascinating that money and insurance were not primary factors in getting help for the person on the other end of the phone.

Pastor Lockett continued, “I believe that change has to take place from the inside out. You must reach that inner person in order to reach the core and make a meaningful connection. We cannot be superficial or strictly professional. The people we deal with on a daily basis don’t care how much you know, just how much you care!”

When asked to elaborate on professional, he said, “It used to be that you had people recovering from drugs, alcohol and prison, who were counselors, and able to fully relate to the experience. Most of them were very proficient in their work. Barriers have been put in place that limits those opportunities today. Now you have professionals how have never experienced the journey, and they try hard, but the connection is not there. Many of them, in fact, are now policy makers. with little or no compassion.”

In closing Pastor Lockett stated, “The overwhelming majority of people incarcerated have a connection to drug and/or alcohol abuse. The key to Recidivism is change from the inside, because until you change the mindset, little change will occur. We must get to the core and deal, trustingly, with the real issues. Those issues are not really drugs and alcohol, but unresolved issues that one uses the drugs and alcohol to escape from. Because they never deal with resolving the real issues, they keep doing it over and over, hence creating a lifestyle of recidivism.”

(Part three we will look at what makes the Micah House so different and successful, as well as, what’s being done from a legislative level and other members of the spiritual communities attempts to make a difference.).