Criminology Discussion

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The American Prison Nightmare by Jason DeParle talks about the worst aspect of the American criminal and correctional system. DeParle is a reporter for the New York Times and he has worked extensively on searching about how incarceration and the American Prison system has taken away the opportunities from many people. Answer to following two questions from his book ‘The American Prison Nightmare’ are mentioned below.

# What is meant by the following two statements?

# a. “If prisons affected no one except the criminals on the inside, they would matter less.”

# b. "If felons were allowed to vote, the United States would have a different president."

The book starts with the experience of the author where he refers to many incidents he believed have shackled his soul or has changed the concept of humanity in his mind. In the beginning, the author has referred to such experience of him to make a case to change the perspective of normal American toward those who are passing their days behind the bars. The meaning of the first statement goes back to tracing the answers of what is crime, why people commit crime, can they avoid doing so, and lastly what the government can do to lessen the average number of people going to jail. The answer to each question presents a negative attribute. Each person involved in making a positive change, concerning the above questions is performing worst. It leaves the criminals and the offenders facing the consequences. As the last consumer of such a large negative circle is the one passing the days inside, therefore, it appears viable when no one takes concern about making them free.

The disappointing aspect of this remains that the prisoners spending their lives inside the lockers have the same hearts, as the outsiders have. They also want to take care of the loved ones as like others, but since they are not fortunate enough, therefore for the outsiders, they have literally become worthless. As Alexander writes that people behind the bars live a life which is a kind of independent, in a sense that they become aimless (Alexander, 2011). Any action of theirs inside is not impactful for others and this is how they delink themselves for the complete life. But since the criminal system is in place, they are provided with the chance to prove themselves as innocent, therefore they keep on remaining as worth for as long they are alive. If they were the lone living bodies on Earth detached from others, with no heirs around, obviously they would matter less.

The second statement makes a reference to the magnanimity of felons the prisons here have. As felons are not allowed to vote, and they are in huge numbers, therefore if their vote had a worth, the results would have been different (DeParle, 2007). But one might think, how their votes could have made a difference. Since they go through a process, which is not normal, which make many things clear in front of them and they become witness to many flaws of system, for such reason they might have thought different to other people of their country. For Sabo and Kupers, the vote of felon is less important, as they don’t have the option of making themselves a witness to a wider world. If they were a part of the wider world ort had all that freedom which an ordinary American have, they could also have been different (Sabo, Kupers, & London, 2001).

Alexander writes that the American criminal system is much cruel (Alexander, 2011). It makes people tend to think in a more definitive way. This definitive way is cruel some and worst. Considering this point, it is a general fact that one who has been to prison once, start thinking in a narrow manner. He becomes a witness to saddest stories, sees worst sides of things, listens to what most people have not heard, consequently, he becomes a *not normal* person. In the very start of the book, author refers to the experience he had with a thirteen-year-old children outside the jail. This is from where he draws his perception for this book. Throughout the book, such incidences keep on creating a pessimistic view about the life of felons outside these cages. As the felons are different to others, they make different decisions and live a different life, thus obviously if they were allowed to vote, they had chosen a President, different to these all (DeParle, 2007).

# In AUDIO: Going Big, the focus is on the lives of children and explicitly not their parents. Why? Discuss this.

The world we live in gives responsibility to anyone for a very small tenure. Not each one is given numerous times to mend the ways. Same is true for the people inside the prisons. They had spent most of the life and their loved ones, outside probably have found other people to depend upon. ForAngold, the lives of children matter, as they are the forbearers of their life, which is yet to spend (Phillips, Erkanli, Keeler, Costello, & Angold, 2006). Likewise, they are not the witness to what their parents have seen inside or outside. It would be a great injustice if they are not provided sizeable opportunities to spend their lives independently. The focus is on the lives of children because they have to take charge of things their parents remained fail in mending. They are taken care of because they have a different and a clueless mind, which can be influenced in a very short span, rather with a very small action.

If a parent is living a life, away from his children in a prison, he can never be a role model. For his children, he has left behind nothing, other than despair and misery. Many things along with the career of his children have taken a direction which it was not supposed to (Haney, 2012). Therefore, it has left many reasons as to why his children should be focused over and not the parents. The life of children matters for many reasons. They are sensitive to the social realities, the care for things happening around them and they take inspiration from societal phenomenon different from their parents. DeParle has been much criticism in this wake, he offers some workable approaches to reform the correctional system to ensure a family structure remains intact. He offers the interpretation put forth by some psychologists which believe that parental involvement in criminal related cases, normally affects badly over children. They call this a *cycle approach* to crime since children normally take inspiration from parents, therefore, the criminal record of parent will surely impact them negatively. The idea of avoiding parents does not relate to the notion that those with children must be neglected, rather it discourages the cycle approach. The lives of children can be made better by presenting to them the opportunities the life offers to them. It remains unjustified if the criminal approach dampens the life of children. DeParle has highlighted many such aspects which he believes remains persistent owing to the criminal system in place in the US. The American Prison nightmare, therefore, remains a relevant read when it comes to highlighting the worst aspects of the American criminal system.

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