

CHAPTER 5

PRISON AND DRUG REFORM

“Jailing people for drug addiction is wrong.” Richard Lyons Weil

“Imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many of our social problems.”
Angela Davis



TURNING CORRECTION INTERVENTION INTO THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION

The United States has less than 5% of the world's population, but it has almost a quarter of the world's prisoners, according to Adam Liptak of the New York Times.⁸ Even more shocking is that over half of federal prisoners were incarcerated for drug crimes in 2010 according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.⁹

In my administration, I will immediately pardon any American's conviction or arrest for any drug offense arising from the personal use of any illegal substance. These people suffer from behavioral health issues, which can only be treated properly by appropriate professionals. I will convert our federal prison system into a corrections-therapeutic model designed to treat and rehabilitate these individuals—putting them back into society as productive, responsible tax payers.

Corrections create the boundaries to allow therapeutic intervention to be effective. Psychological research shows that punitive measures in conjunction with behavioral health treatment provides the best prognosis for recovery and successful re-integration into society.

The pro-reform Drug Policy Alliance estimates that combining state and local spending on everything from drug related arrests to prison, yields a total cost of over \$51 billion per year. Specifically, during the course of four decades American taxpayers have spent \$1 trillion on the drug war.

Most tragically, “the punishment falls disproportionately on people of color. Blacks make up 50% of the state and local prisoners incarcerated for drug crimes. Black kids are ten times more likely to be arrested for drug crimes than white ones, even though white kids are more likely to abuse drugs.”¹⁰

The Vera Institute of Justice released a study in 2012 finding the aggregate cost of prisons in 2010 in the 40 states that participated was \$31,286 per inmate.¹¹ However, a New York Times article published August 2013 found that New York’s annual cost per inmate was \$168,000.¹²

This solution benefits those incarcerated, their families, and society in general, both economically and socially. And let us not forget that since

1972, when republican President Richard M. Nixon instituted his war on drugs over 15 million Americans have been arrested for marijuana offenses.¹³ It is time for all drugs to be decriminalized and distributed in a safe regulated taxed system.