

# THE TARTAN CON

## The Rants of an Ex-Prisoner

Welcome to my new monthly column in JailMail.

This is my third rant in Jail Mail, the first two can be read in November's and December's issues.

If you have already seen my previous rants, I hope you enjoyed them!

Over the coming months I will be writing (more like ranting!) on the issues surrounding our prisons today.

If however, there is any issue that you think maybe of interest to other readers, please do contact JailMail and I will endeavour to write a piece on your subject.

I am an ex-prisoner, recently released. I choose to write under a pseudonym as I want the subject of my writings to be the topic of conversation not my identity.

What I write, is a personal opinion and if I offend then I apologise, but everyone is entitled to their opinion, are they not?

I thought that this time I would take a look at why no-one really talks about the good things that can come out of a prison sentence.

Over the past few weeks we have read about the "incidents" at HMP's Birmingham, Lewes, Bedford, and Winchester.

It seems that the public has a huge appetite to learn of just how dreadful the conditions are in our jails today and the riots caused by, as the Sun would have it, "The Lags".

I hate that connotation, don't you?

Just as a side matter, for those of you that are inside, you should know that there is a huge debate going on out here in the land of the public about what to call prisoners.

Do they call us / you Prisoners, Offenders, Convicts, People with convictions etc.?

Well I don't know about you but I never cared what I was called when I was inside, I only cared what they called me when I left prison. 'Nuff said?

Anyway, I digress. Here's the question for this article.

**Why is it that people only want to know about the bad things that happen in prison rather than the good things that can come out of it?**

Or is it the fact that the mainstream media only think that bad stories sell their rags not the uplifting ones?

I say that prison reform can not start until the people that elect those in authority understand that good things can come out of the prison system.

When they get that, then I believe that they will act to ensure that more good things happen for a man or woman when they are incarcerated.

It would be outrageously arrogant of me to write all about my experiences in prison. So let's do just that!

My prison sentence worked for me, I left a better person than entered. I learnt how to be that better person, more tolerant of others.

I met and befriended people whom I would have otherwise never met and got to see the world from their eyes.

I was mentored by some marvellous people who cared about my well being; about my road to rehabilitation.

It wasn't a lightning bolt moment for me; it took all of my time in prison to change.

After all I wanted to rid myself of the dreadful person that I felt I had become and rebuild (sort of like the six million dollar man – but on a prison budget!).

The prison staff gave me the time and space to affect that change and were there to catch me if I fell.

The support I received from the staff was simply outstanding. I fully believe that the majority of staff do want to help those who want to help themselves.

Sure, there is always going to be staff in any job that are "jobsworths". I just didn't pay them any attention!

I left prison vowing to try and make a change, and in some small way my blogs and rants do just that.

They get to the public and they read them, and who knows; someone somewhere might just listen to what I am ranting about.

I want them to understand that done well, a prison sentence can actually do what it is supposed to do; rehabilitate a person and make that person a better member of society.

But it is an uphill battle, people. Good news doesn't sell papers, does it?

How do we get the public to be aware of this?

If you have the answer to that then please let me know!

I am not the only the one for whom prison has worked. There is a great new book out by a former prisoner called LJ Flanders.

He has written a book called "Cell – Workout", get it sent in if you are inside or ask the library to order it or buy it.

Whatever you do, support him!

There are many more that have left prison a better person and have never re-offended again in their lives.

Is that because they have been incarcerated or not? I can't answer that. I can

only mention the amount of people with whom I am in contact that are getting on with their lives in a good way.

The system however needs fixing; the idiotic recalls to prison need to stop. To recall someone to prison must be the last resort and not the first option.

The CRC's and probation service are stretched so thin that if it were elastic you could see through it.

Regrettably some staff feel it easier to move someone back into custody rather than address the reason behind a prisoner's breach.

This therefore gives a false figure of the success stories the prisons have in releasing someone back into society.

So that's it in a nutshell, folks, Prison CAN work for people and we must shout from the mountain tops when it does.

We must get it out there so that the public can see that some of us have changed the error of our ways.

This and only this will get the society that jailed us to understand that, done properly it can work. I

f they understand this perhaps they will not be so vociferous in wanting to lap up the salacious news of how prisons fail us and will focus on the good points.

Of course, this is just my opinion, I could be wrong.

**The Tartan Con will be back next month with a new rant, we hope you enjoyed this month's edition!**

### Who am I?

I was sentenced to 7yrs and 6 Months imprisonment and was released at the half way period.

I was resident in 3 prisons during my time in Custody and tried to be of some use.

I witnessed not only shocking events but saw first hand the sheer bureaucracy that the prison service faces at the hands of those so very ill-equipped to handle the prison estate.

I was a high profile individual, though not that I wished to be! It is for that reason

that I opt to remain in the background for as long as possible.

I wish for my blogs and points raised therein to be the focus of attention not my profile. I hope that you, dear reader(s), understand and respect that.

I plan to write a monthly blog on what I, as an ex-prisoner, see both wrong and right about prison life.

You see I am not a prison hater nor am I anti-establishment.

I just hate to see good people being railroaded into oblivion (both staff and inmates alike).

My thoughts and ramblings are just mine and any fault with them should be laid at my feet and no one else's.

So if I offend with any of my writings then the blame is upon me and for that I apologise.

The Blogs are just the ramblings of an old fool and are my opinions.

But hey, everyone is entitled to their opinion are they not?

You can read more of the Tartan Con's blogs at:

<http://thetartancon.blogspot.co.uk>

If there are any issues which you would like the Tartan Con to rant about, please write to us at:

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