

Record

288

File Number

10259

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Title: Thinking about crime, sacrifice and community

Original source: National Conference on Reaffirming Rehabilitation

Resource type: Written

Publication Date: 21/06/86

Publisher info: -

Abstract

John McKnight (the founder of the Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Research at Northwestern University, Illinois) wrote this paper about rehabilitation during which he remembers a visit to a correctional centre where he was told that the only thing they were sure of was that ageing of a person often brought about a decline in criminal activity. The paper discusses the various rehabilitation models and argues that these treatments don't work. While the author believes that these various rehabilitation models will continue to be used, he argues that it is 'communities' that work. **Keywords: Community Development**

THINKING ABOUT CRIME, SACRIFICE AND COMMUNITY

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Presented at the National Conference on Reaffirming Rehabilitation
of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives
June 21, 1986

It was many years ago when I had my first contact with the correctional field. A warden of a county jail serving a large city suggested that I tour his institution. The gentleman was well prepared for his responsibilities for he had both a law degree and a doctor's degree in sociology with special emphasis upon deviance.

When we had completed the tour, we stood on a catwalk overlooking a vast room. It was filled with picnic tables. Suspended from the catwalk at each corner of the room was a television set. Seated at the picnic tables were more than a thousand men. Some watched the television, some talked, some played cards, many stared. Almost all of them were young. Almost all of them were black.

As we looked down upon this scene, I asked my correctional colleague how much time the men spent in the room. He told me that except for meals, one hour in a small yard outdoors and cell time, they spent all their time in this room.

Because he could see that I was troubled by this form of treatment, he told me something that summarized all of his scholarship and experience. "You may not realize this," he said, "but you are observing the only method of rehabilitation that we are sure works. These men are aging," he said. "When they reach a certain time in their late twenties or early thirties, they will stop engaging in the behavior that brought them here. You see," he assured me, "the one thing we know for sure, is that as people grow older their tendency to engage in most types of violent crimes rapidly declines."

We both stood silently and looked over the hundreds of men seated at picnic tables. And I saw them for the first time through the eyes of a correctional official. I saw them there, all aging. As each second ticked away, normality grew closer. It was an apparently satisfying vision for my correctional colleague. It gave his work meaning in a situation that otherwise might have been a scene of surrealistic meaninglessness.

Since that day two decades past, I have never had the opportunity to talk to another professional in corrections. Therefore, I am unaware whether the state of correctional science has changed from the understanding of my learned friend.

I am aware, however, that there are scholars, today, whose conclusions are much the same as those of my correctional colleague. It is my understanding, also, that these scholars are also persuaded that even the aging process fails for a significant number of people. In this predicted failure, they also see the appropriateness of execution.

For those who hold this viewpoint, it is a curiously satisfying, indeed benign understanding of crime, criminality and corrections. Deviance appears, afflicts, is healed by time - except on those unfortunate occasions when its cure is necessarily death imposed.

As an understanding, it does, however, seem absent the benefits of human intervention beyond the sporadic work of the executioner. Indeed, one wonders why an expert in corrections is needed at all in this world ruled by the march of time.

With great respect for those learned scholars and associated consultants whose science finds in behalf of the aging process, it is nonetheless reasonable to inquire into the possibilities of other means to rehabilitate.

It is a curious notion, this modern idea of rehabilitation. One hears it said that "he is being rehabilitated," much as one hears that an ill person is being cured. This therapeutic understanding is confirmed by the fact that there are all kinds of inventions called "treatment modalities." Indeed, a careful listening to the rehabilitation literature confirms that it is not the therapeutic ideology but the ideology of allopathic therapy that appears to guide the rehabilitative professions. This is quite natural, of course, because those of us residing in the United States have a deep faith in the understanding of allopathic medicine - the healing philosophy that guides those professionals with the letters M.D. after their names. Nonetheless it is also true that this allopathic understanding is only one of tens of thousands of healing methods that are being and have been practiced by human kind in the pursuit of healing and regeneration.

What is most significant about the allopathic approach is the radical nature of its basic premise. For along the continuum of world healing practices, allopathic medicine stands at one pole - an extremist premise. Its' radical position grows from the unique belief that the malady is in the person and the cure is achieved by professional intrusion into that person. In that understanding the allopathic faith stands isolated in therapeutic history as it ignores both the world around the person, and the person, as healers. Instead, it emphasizes the malady within and the expert assault upon that pathogen.

In contrast, nearly all other regenerative ideas comprehend an inextricable relationship between the person and the social and physical world in which they reside, and an immutable force in the persons own will to heal. So it is that most time tested healing

rites convene community, draw power from the earth, and call on the spirit of the afflicted.

Allopathic therapy and its ideology, on the other hand, disperses community, isolates the afflicted and calls on the spirit of expert intervention. It is indeed an exceptional belief. And it is upon the foundations of this extremist understanding that our rehabilitative sciences are built today.

Whether or not one believes that the allopathic belief system is the true faith of healing, it certainly does not follow that its unique physiologically based premises are appropriate to analysis or action relating to crime, criminality and corrections. Indeed, it is more reasonable to suggest that this radical theory, designed to address the treatment of duodenal ulcers, is not likely to provide either effective theory or practice regarding those who seem not to respect the property or persons of others.

The rehabilitative sciences appear then to be allopathic captives. And yet we know that allopathic medicine was not even a significant factor in the great health advances that have doubled our life expectancy in the last two centuries. As the great English epidemiologist, Thomas McKeown, has so elegantly demonstrated, the great improvements in our health were caused by action by communities to change the environment. Our great leap forward in health was caused by our collective decisions to purify water, separate waste, pasteurize milk, etc. Allopathic medicine was practically a bystander.

Therefore, if we choose to follow an analogous ideology in pursuit of rehabilitation, the health model should guide us. Indeed, the allopathic model is increasingly understood as a counterproductive faith that fails to recognize the wholeness of people, their land and their community. This counterproductivity is so widespread that studies of the iatrogenic effects (doctor created disease) have led the Center for Disease Control to predict that during 1986 there will be more than 80,000 deaths due to hospital treatment by allopathic medicine.

It is no wonder, then, that those rehabilitation efforts modelled after allopathic medicine should be found wanting. For allopathic medicine has not been a major contributor to our health and is now scientifically recognized as a significant cause of the very maladies it seeks to cure.

For this reason, it strikes me that the rehabilitation field will begin to achieve a respected place in society when it breaks free of its allopathic captivity. At the center of this liberation will need to be the recognition that treatment doesn't work. Communities work. And working communities both prevent crime and heal criminals. Thus, the possible future will reach beyond allopathy, therapy and even de-institutionalization to what might be called re-communalization - a recognition that it is in person, place and peers that possibilities of regenerative community occur.

In this understanding I can commend to you the work of Dr. Jerome Miller and the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives. They have pioneered the reconstruction of community and the convicted in a national program that calls upon local associations and organizations to build themselves by helping in the regeneration of others.

It should be noted, incidentally, that this program in reincorporation (to make a whole body) is paralleled by exciting new efforts by other groups who seek to do the same thing with people labelled mentally ill, retarded, disabled and elderly. It is in alliance with these pioneer efforts at recomunalization that, I believe, the corrections field can escape its counter productive fascination with treatment and become a participant in the rehabilitation of community life that can both prevent criminality and rehabilitate the offenders.

The best description of this developing movement in the United States is Robert Woodson's book, A Call to Life. In his national search for working examples of prevention and rehabilitation he found that the prevention of crime, the rehabilitation of persons and the reconstruction of community are not three ideas. They are one idea, spoken in three different ways. I commend Woodson's Call to Life because it gives cases and guidelines toward a recomunalizing path for rehabilitation.

There is, then, great hope ahead for a wholistic, community building rehabilitation movement.

At the same time, I fear there is one great barrier to this hope. To recognize the barrier, we need to return to the catwalk of the county jail where the warden saw a thousand men aging toward rehabilitation.

Among the thousand men, over 900 were black. In the county served by the jail, less than 20% of the people are black.

How do we explain this disproportion, for it is a disproportion of extreme selectivity? While young black men represent less than 2% of the county's population, they represent 80% to 90% of those jailed and eligible for execution.

It strikes me that there are two traditional explanations for the disproportion. The first is that the persons incarcerated are genetically deficient. This racist view, whether held by bigots, geneticists or new-breed social scientists is unworthy of our civilized consideration.

The second explanation has it that these young black men are the result of a disproportionate experience with a poor environment . . . created by a history of slavery, racism and poverty that now expresses itself in joblessness, poor schools, terrible housing, etc. And all of this is true. Absolutely and devastatingly true.

But it doesn't really explain the radical nature of the disproportion. For a significant proportion of the non-black population

also faces joblessness, poor schools, and terrible housing. But they do not appear at the jail picnic tables in anything like appropriate numbers.

In the years since I stood on that catwalk, the reality of the radical disproportion has continued to persist. And the reason for the overwhelming incarceration and execution of young black men has continued to test my understanding.

Therefore, we may need to search for the answer in disciplines other than sociology or psychology. My own sense is that the 900 black men at the picnic tables are more likely explained by anthropology or history. Let me suggest an understanding drawn from those disciplines.

We know, historically, that across hemispheres and through time, most societies have engaged in sacrificial offerings. Animals have been sacrificed and people have been sacrificed. The Mayans chose to sacrifice young virgins. The Puritans chose to sacrifice women they believed to be witches. The Germans chose to sacrifice Jewish people.

This will to sacrifice is found across cultures and throughout time. Its persistence is remarkable. And its roots are deep within Western society, rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The practice is clearly described by Paul, speaking to the Hebrews, about Moses. He says that Moses "took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and sprinkled both the book and all the people ... Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood. And without shedding of blood there is no redemption."

So we know that our culture, like most others, has been deeply committed to the idea that in sacrificial acts, guilt is overcome and regeneration is possible.

While the sacrificial concept is nearly universal, those who are to be sacrificed are unpredictable. Virgins in the Yucatan, grandmothers in Salem, Jews in Buchenwald - each is the peculiar sacrifice of a people in search of renewal and freedom from guilt.

It is impolite these days to suggest that we may be a people with a history and culture linked to all human kind. Nonetheless, it might also be foolish to suggest that we are a people unique and free of the will to sacrifice. Indeed, it is possible that we are actually the children of our Mayan, Puritan, German ancestors. And that the radical disproportion of young black men is basically explained as our form of sacrifice.

We may hide it behind gray walls, rather than sprinkling blood in the public tabernacle. We may execute in the darkest hours of the night, rather than at high noon on a pyramid. But that may be because we are ashamed that we are still engaged in human sacrifice.

If we are so engaged, then there is a terrible truth we must face. And it is this:

The Mayans sacrificed virgins because they mistakenly believed these young women were the purest and best offering they could make to the gods.

The Germans sacrificed the Jews because they mistakenly believed Jewish people were representatives of evil and that purity depended upon a purge.

But we are different. We do not believe, I suspect, that young black men are symbols of purity or that they represent demonic force. Even the new academic conservatives would admit that the young black men are sociological phenomena, expressions of terrible environments. But we still deprive them of liberty and life as did the Mayans and the Germans. But unlike the Mayans and the Germans, we know that the young black men are creations of a world we made, rather than a world of devils, witches, virgins and gods.

If we choose, then, to sacrifice those whose world we created, it should indeed be done behind high walls and in the deep of night. For we haven't even the integrity of those whose mistaken beliefs were that the sacrificed were the embodiments of purity or devilry.

It would indeed be a degraded civilization that consistently inflicted its worst upon those it knew to be the result of a history of subjugation. It could never relieve its guilt by sacrificing those who were creations of that history. The history would live on no matter the number of young black men whose lives were sacrificed.

We cannot kill our history. We cannot sacrifice enough people to hide the truth that the evil in our time is what Ken Clark has called the "dark ghetto," and not the people who live within it.

William James noted our apparent human fondness for war. Therefore, he suggested that we would not end war until we found a moral equivalent for war. It may also be the case that we will not end human sacrifice until we find its moral equivalent. I suspect that our penal institutions consistently fail to rehabilitate because they are largely places of human sacrifice. They may not change until we end their sacrificial function. Therefore, the possibility of correctional reform may require the moral equivalent of sacrifice.

Let me propose, then, that we sacrifice the ghetto. That we take our sacrificial nature and use it to offer up to God a Heavenly City - Dr. King's City, where rich men and poor men, black children and white children may live in justice, free of human sacrifice forever.

These reflections were informed by the lives of two people. The first is Judith Snow, a woman whose life has been lived without the power to move any of her body. She taught me about the uses of human sacrifice, and reminded me that I should ask those who are to be

sacrificed to speak for themselves. At least one such voice ought be heard in this paper, she told me.

Therefore, I conclude with some of the words of another person, Daniel Morris Thomas, as recorded by the New York Times of April 15, 1986:

"Kicking, cursing and fighting with five prison guards, Daniel Morris Thomas was strapped into Florida's electric chair today and executed for shooting a man and raping his wife as her husband lay dying.

A prison spokesman said the struggle was the first to take place in Florida State Prison's execution chamber within memory.

Cursing and screaming, "Get off me!" the 37-year-old inmate was subdued after a seven minute struggle.

"It was violent," said Vernon Bradford, a prison spokesman, referring to Mr. Thomas's struggle in the death chamber. "It was the first time this has happened in my experience."

Mr. Thomas, a member of the ski-mask gang that rampaged through rural central Florida for 10 months in 1975 and 1976, was convicted of murdering Charles Anderson, 48, a professor at the University of Florida, on New Year's Day 1976. The killer raped Mrs. Anderson as her husband bled to death in their home in rural Polk County.

Officials said the gang was responsible for two murders, five rapes and several beatings in a 10-month rampage. The police said the crimes were racially motivated; all the victims were white.

After he was seated in the electric chair Mr. Thomas, who was about six feet tall and weighed 180 pounds, slid down into the chair, his legs thrashing at the men trying to restrain him.

The guards finally managed to pin Mr. Thomas to the chair, and a strap was placed around his chin.

The prison superintendent, Richard Dugger, then approached the condemned man, leaned over and spoke to him, apparently telling him he would not be able to read his last statement unless he stopped struggling.

Mr. Thomas then quieted and began reading from a yellow legal sheet in a low voice to the 19 witnesses who had watched the struggle through large windows.

"We are human tools, political pawns, political human sacrifices for the politicians," Mr. Thomas said, referring to Florida's 241 prisoners on death row.

The switch was thrown at 12:14 P.M., and the inmate was pronounced dead five minutes later.