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Dawson Here!



Some may call Gavin the blacksheep of the 1080 staff. After four years developing script writing and delivery techniques in the exciting world of telemarketing, he dropped out of college and to a job at the old KVAN 1550. Dawson considers his lack of an alma matter a strength because he has no allegiances in college sports and can therefore look at games with an unbiased eye. After two years in the news department at 1550, he jumped at the chance to join The Fan and has been a fixture ever since.

Wednesday, 9-6--06

Insiders Perspective on Prison Reform

About a year and a half ago, I touched base with Seth Ferranti. An inmate in the correctional system with a gift for writing who had chosen to write about one of the greatest prison basketball players of all time. The article appeared on hoopshype.com, I found it interesting, and contacted him requesting an interview on the radio. He joined our show, and since then I've kept up regular correspondence because his story is fascinating for several reasons.

Number one being, his ability to open eyes to prison reform. Seth's in a unique position to address the situation, being roughly halfway through a 25 YEAR sentence for selling LSD, and being the successful author of a book entitled "Prison Stories".



It received rave reviews. Recently I asked Seth to write about his ideas on the prison system. Here it is.

Most Prisons now are just warehouses for men and women. There is no incentive to change. No parole, no benefits, nada. There is nothing rehabilitative about being in prison. They call the guards correctional officers, but they don't correct anything. Prisoners are just left to rot and aren't prepared in any way to return to society. They are given no tools to succeed. The skills one develops to survive in prison are the ones that if exhibited in society will lead a person back to prison. The whole criminal justice system needs to be re-worked. We are the leading incarcerator in the world. Right now, it is all about punishment. Everything in here centers on the security of the institution. The administration doesn't care about correcting anyone. A person who tries to prepare for their future in prison faces numerous obstacles while a disruptive prisoner is catered too by staff. Prisoners need to build skills so that they can succeed in society. College courses, vocational skills, learning a trade - that is what the money should be put into. Prevention and rehabilitation. Not punishment.

One might take exception to Seth's final word. Most of us believe prison should be used to punish criminals and to protect society. But what a lot of folks, politicians, judges, and lawyers don't see is that their definition of punishment has become unlawful, cruel, and ineffective in making the U.S.A a safer place. I'm just saying think about it. A guy gets busted for doing something stupid as a kid, then spends 20+ years becoming trained as a gladiator, drug dealer, manipulator, and scorned individual with a high disdain for authority.

We will, and are beginning already, to see this dynamic in the streets of Portland. When the crips, bloods, and other gangs migrated north in the 80s and 90s, the police cracked down. Ultimately thousands of bad dudes were sent off to the big house. We are now in the early stages of a release window where gang members are being put on the streets. Would you have rather have had the learning and developing job skills in a secure environment, or spending their days plotting on how to survive or do damage in a cut-throat world where aggressiveness and intimidation are among the most highly valued traits?

Luckily I get the feeling from Seth that he's doing alright. He comes off as a street smart guy with good people skills and obvious an insightful mind. You can read more on his webpage, gorillaconvict.com. It has some fantastic stuff in it including stories about "goodfellas" hosting Sunday Italian dinners.

Tuesday, 9-5-06

College Football Week One Reax

1-USC. Wow, they did it again. Mr. new Booty may be as good as Leinart was last year. Seriously, they must be cheating.