Dear Carvelle,

Greetings, I received your letter and your response was a breath of fresh air; your willingness to assist brothers under these oppressive conditions is a blessing. Before I go any further, I will like to acknowledge your work with the brothers at Mantic that suffer from institutional conditions, keep up the fight for the Voiceless.

I will greatly appreciate any information regarding your organization. I am interested in learning more about your mission and the overall vision you have. You can forward me one copy of each and I will make sure Brother receive copies.

Carvelle, you mention that there are two areas of focus which are healing and community building. Please give me some clarity on the healing aspect. Because when I think of healing, my thoughts immediately went to something or someone hurt and broke. Do you view the Community as such? Because many of us behind these walls are the by-product of these broken communities. The truth is there is a lot of pain and suffering behind these walls. This pain I'm talking about did not begin at the start of ones prison sentence. This trauma has been unaddressed since many of our childhoods. Being a witness to perpetual acts of Violence may it have occur within ones household or through the community than.

My interest is addressing the traumatic experience that have never been properly addressed. So these brothers can start the healing process. There is no healing without addressing this pain directly. We know hurt people hurt people. I realize after years of assisting in the facilitation of programs such as Domestic Violence, Anger management, Embracing Fatherhood. Something of importance was missing. We know that individuals don't wake up and say, I'm going beat my wife, girlfriend, or Step, hurt someone just because. No there is a lot of pain present in their lives. With the understanding of that, for roughly 2 years, I tirelessly read about trauma to seek a better understanding of the impact, when it goes unaddressed. (Figure of speech)

Knowing this is a sensitive issue topic. I slowly incorporated in the programs by addressing myself in a room of men by not carrying the shame of Trauma. It open the Flood gates for individuals to share without having the fear to be laughed at. I truly am grateful for the Counselor for giving me and another brother to use such platform.

Now I'm focus on creating a Trauma basic program that can be relatable to the target
group. I'm hoping to assist these brothers navigate through this dark place in their life that it hard
to discuss. So currently I'm in the process of creating a program as I mentioned. So the healing part will
be of very importance. Because it will be neglected to open a wound (which is trauma) and not
be able to close it with properly cleaning the wound (which is healing) right?

Upon completion I will forward you a copy of the program, if you can offer any input. Cornelio,
you know I think we should consider brainstorming on how do we build a bridge between
our local place of worship, Mosque, Churches, and Organization to assist returning citizen.
Where they Continue to receive Spiritual support.

As I mentioned I have access to the population. Explain your training and how
Long does it take. Because we really need to start addressing the Cycle of Violence
and Community building. We need to show individuals how it looks to so they can envision
a new Community. I have been incarcerated roughly 18 years and I am tire of seeing
these brothers return back to prison or get killed when they are released.

We must also realize that nothing happen overnight but the work of saving lives
is always worth the time. Well I'm going to close this letter. Whenever you want to setup
Visitations let me know. I also will like for you to experience in the near future.
The youth block they treated us here, to witness these young men grow and develop themselves
is a Beautiful Site to see. If I am not sure when will be the next youth engagement,
but would you be open to an invitation?

Peace

P.S. Enforced is a paper I wrote 3 years
time, it might be of interest to you.
My name is Carl Alexander; currently incarcerated in Cheshire Correctional institution. In 2003, I was sentenced to a prison term of 43 years for the crime of armed robbery, kidnapping and escape from custody. I have been incarcerated for 15 years since the age of 20 years old, for the majority of my adult life. The purpose why I felt the need to self-disclose such personal information, is because I do not want my past transgressions to be a distraction for my critics. Making such information available to the readers allows them to move on and judge the contents of this essay. I wish to offer a prisoner’s perspective on prison reform. The truth is that many politicians, correctional personnel and staff have controlled the narrative of prison reform. Should not the ones that are affected have a voice?

It is time to take a critical look into comprehensive prison reform and the steps that are needed to reduce one of THE HIGHEST RECIDIVISM RATES in the country and curve MASS—INCARCERATION in Connecticut. The old philosophy of “Lock them up and throw away the key” that so many politicians chanted for the last 30 years, planted fear to the citizenry of our country. This method has proven to be unproductive for our nation causing the highest prison population in the world. This method has also caused disfranchisement of Black and Hispanic Men/Women from their communities to prison cells throughout our country. This is reflective by the discriminative laws, sentence disparities, and the war on drugs that have been waged in the urban communities. Let us not forget the substantial cost in our state budget upward of a billion dollars.

The Connecticut Department of Correction mission is to protect the public, protect staff, and provide safe, secure, and humane supervision of offenders with the opportunities that support successful community reintegration. This should promote the reduction of recidivism by offenders entering prison through “rehabilitation” which is defined IN WEBSTER’S DICTIONARY as “restore to good health or useful life as through education or therapy.” In spite of this goal; the Connecticut Department of Correction is falling short in achieving this task. This failure has a direct link to cost and safety concerns, within the communities offenders would be released to. It is estimated that 90% of Connecticut’s prison population will be released. It should be of great concern to the public on how their tax dollars are spent in regards to the treatment that offenders are receiving. Treatment options include mental health, substance abuse as well as educational and vocational opportunities to assist offenders to make a positive transition back to society. The reality is that it is unacceptable to believe in the current system that has proven to be ineffective. Connecticut is challenged with a 270% recidivism rate due to the negligence of legislators and the Department of Correction. It is their refusal to pass or enact policy which will ensure that offenders have the tool needed to return as functioning members of society. The truth is, I am baffled that 70% recidivism has been acceptable in our state. If Apple was to have a “70% return rate of i-Phone the stakeholders would have an outcry and demand

---

1 The Justice Imperative, Malta Justice Initiative Brian Moran Page 21
My name is Carl Alexander; currently incarcerated in Cheshire Correctional institution. In 2003, I was sentenced to a prison term of 43 years for the crime of armed robbery, kidnapping and escape from custody. I have been incarcerated for 15 years since the age of 20 years old, for the majority of myadult life. The purpose why I felt the need to self-disclose such personal information, is because I do not want my past transgressions to be a distraction for my critics. Making such information available to the readers allows them to move on and judge the contents of this essay. I wish to offer a prisoner’s perspective on prison reform. The truth is that many politicians, correctional personnel and staff have controlled the narrative of prison reform. Should not the ones that are affected have a voice?

It is time to take a critical look into comprehensive prison reform and the steps that are needed to reduce one of THE HIGHEST RECIDIVISM RATES in the country and curve MASS—INCARCERATION in Connecticut. The old philosophy of “Lock them up and throw away the key” that so many politicians chanted for the last 30 years, planted fear to the citizenry of our country. This method has proven to be unproductive for our nation causing the highest prison population in the world. This method has also caused disfranchisement of Black and Hispanic Men/Women from their communities to prison cells throughout our country. This is reflective by the discriminative laws, sentence disparities, and the war on drugs that have been waged in the urban communities. Let us not forget the substantial cost in our state budget upward of a billion dollars.

The Connecticut Department of Correction mission is to protect the public, protect staff, and provide safe, secure, and humane supervision of offenders with the opportunities that support successful community reintegration. This should promote the reduction of recidivism by offenders entering prison through “rehabilitation” which is defined IN WEBSTER’S DICTIONARY as “restore to good health or useful life as through education or therapy.” In spite of this goal; the Connecticut Department of Correction is falling short in achieving this task. This failure has a direct link to cost and safety concerns, within the communities offenders would be released to. It is estimated that 90% of Connecticut’s prison population will be released. It should be of great concern to the public on how their tax dollars are spent in regards to the treatment that offenders are receiving. Treatment options include mental health, substance abuse as well as educational and vocation opportunities to assist offenders to make a positive transition back to society. The reality is that it is unacceptable to believe in the current system that has proven to be ineffective. Connecticut is challenged with a 170% recidivism rate due to the negligence of legislators and the Department of Correction. It is their refusal to pass or enact policy which will ensure that offenders have the tool needed to return as functioning members of society. The truth is, I am baffled that 70% recidivism has been acceptable in our state. If Apple was to have a “70% return rate of I-Phone the stakeholders would have an outcry and demand

1 The Justice Imperative, Malta Justice Initiative Brian Moran Page 21
change. Are you not a stakeholder? The demand for transparency and systemic change should not be ignored.

The majority of prisoners that are being released are unprepared to make a positive transition back to society. This unpreparedness has nothing to do with the offender’s unwillingness, but has to do with the inaction of the Department of Correction to provide the tools that are needed to become productive members of society. Connecticut is one of several states that aggressively warehouse its inmate population by confining individuals in their cells for 21 to 22 hours a day. Many states have taken the opposite approach and found success in targeting recidivism and re-integration. It should be noted that many states utilize this form of punishment for only the most violent offenders within their prison system. Such treatment is counterproductive to rehabilitation. This method only increases antisocial behavior within the inmate population. When an offender is sentenced, he is placed in the Department of Correction. Depending on the length of sentence and severity of the crime they will be designated to serve their sentence anywhere from a level 4 (maximum security) to a level 2 (minimum security). There is roughly 65% to 75% of the inmate population waiting to be released, but are caught sitting idle due to lack of resources within the Correctional facilities. This style of Correction is what keeps the recidivism rate the highest in the nation. We must abandon the warehousing attitude of our state prison and move aggressively towards education, vocational, job training, life skills, substance abuse and mental health treatment to prepare these offenders to be assets within these communities rather than liabilities. This will ensure that your tax dollars will be spent effectively. Statistics have always supported that offenders participating in educational programs while in prison decrease their recidivism rates dramatically. The cost of running our state prisons is upward of a billion dollars, costing roughly\(^7\) $35,000 per-inmates. This number increases when we take into account mental health treatment, medical conditions, and other unforeseeable costs.

We as citizens most determine the practices that are best to reform our state prison system to ensure that it will be cost effective for the taxpayers and ensure that Public safety will not be jeopardized. There should be no doubt that what is needed to make our state prison system a more progressive department that will ensure that recidivism is reduced, and that the 90% of the prison population that will be released are assets to their communities. What can you do to create change? Contact your local representative and ask for their position on prison reforms, Start social groups to promote and address issues that directly affect prisoners and their loved ones, and have your local place of worship engage in the fight for change in ending mass incarceration within our state. Support policy that promotes educational programing in the Department of Correction. Share this letter with a friend.

The writer is an active member of the lifers’ Group and is currently being housed at the Cheshire Correctional institution. He can be contacted at Carl Alexander #268703, 900 Highland street, Cheshire, C.T.06410

\(^7\) The Justice Imperative page 18