



February 2014

Prescription for Safer Communities

Chuck Colson

Pat Nolan

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndjlepp>

Recommended Citation

Chuck Colson & Pat Nolan, *Prescription for Safer Communities*, 18 NOTRE DAME J.L. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 387 (2004).
Available at: <http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndjlepp/vol18/iss2/8>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy at NDLScholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy by an authorized administrator of NDLScholarship. For more information, please contact lawdr@nd.edu.

PRESCRIPTION FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

CHUCK COLSON* & PAT NOLAN**

I. AMERICA'S THIRTY YEAR WAR ON CRIME

For over thirty years, America has struggled to reduce our outrageously high crime rates without success. Through Democratic as well as Republican administrations, our criminal justice system has been unable to find the right policies to make our neighborhoods safer. Crime has resumed its upward trajectory after a brief respite in the nineties, due in some measure to demographic shifts. Many of our people—particularly the most vulnerable: the young, the elderly and the poor—cower in fear behind barred windows, afraid of becoming victims of crime.

We bring unique credentials to a discussion of crime and its antidotes. Both of us were energetic partisans in the war on crime. In our previous careers in government we were both staunch proponents of “tough on crime” policies. Chuck Colson, as Senior Counsel to President Nixon wrote some of the former president’s most strident “law and order” speeches and directed withering attacks against Democrats accusing them of being soft on crime. Pat Nolan, as Republican Leader in the California Assembly pushed to expand California’s prison system and led the fight to restore the death penalty and make it harder for convicts to be paroled.

Each of us saw our political careers end abruptly when we were convicted of crimes and sent to live in the very penal institutions about which we had so freely expressed our opinions. What we saw in prison caused us to reexamine the policies that we had so ardently advocated, and we each came to the same conclusion: both the liberals and the conservatives were wrong on crime.

The liberals said that poverty and lack of education lead to crime. Yet, that does not explain why millions of poor, uneducated people do not commit crimes or harm other people.

* Chuck Colson is the Founder and Chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries. He served as Senior Counsel to President Nixon. He pled guilty to one count of obstruction of justice and served seven months in federal prisons.

** Pat Nolan is President of Justice Fellowship. He served in the California Assembly from 1978–1994 and was the Republican Floor Leader from 1984–1988. He pled guilty to one count of racketeering involving solicitation of campaign contributions and served twenty-nine months in federal prisons.

There must be some reason other than poverty or lack of education that would lead someone to a life of crime.

On the other hand, the conservatives said that the penalties for crime were too lenient; that if we ratcheted up the sentences criminals would turn to other lines of work. Yet, that presumes that criminals are rational calculators, carefully weighing the consequences of their actions. Our experiences in prison belie that. Neither of us ever met an inmate that thought they would get caught, and certainly most did not have the foggiest idea what the penalties for their crime were when they committed the crime.

So, if both approaches are wrong, what is the solution to our crime problem?

II. THE GROWING CRISIS IN OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

To understand the immensity of the crisis in our criminal justice system, a few facts are in order. One out of every 142 Americans is behind bars today—over two million people.¹ That is triple the rate of just twenty years ago.² In addition, another 4.7 million Americans are on probation or parole, meaning that one in about every forty-four adults is either in custody or on supervised release.³

The annual cost of this imprisonment and supervision exceeds \$40 billion.⁴ Government at all levels spent \$147 billion on crime related expenses: police protection, corrections, and

1. Paige M. Harrison & Jennifer C. Karberg, U.S. Dep't. of Justice, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2002*, BUREAU JUST. STAT. BULL. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Wash. D.C.), Apr. 2003, at 1, 2 (citing the statistics as of June 2002), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/pjim02.pdf> (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

2. See Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Dep't of Justice, Key Facts at a Glance, Correctional Populations, at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/tables/corr2tab.htm> (last revised July 27, 2003) (citing survey information through 2002) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

3. See Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Dep't. of Justice, Probation and Parole Statistics, at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pandp.htm> (last revised Aug. 20, 2003) (citing statistics as of yearend 2002) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy); U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov> (citing estimated population numbers) (last visited Feb. 23, 2004) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

4. See JENNI GAINSBOROUGH & MARC MAUER, THE SENTENCING PROJECT, DIMINISHING RETURNS: CRIME AND INCARCERATION IN THE 1990s, at 3 (2000), available at <http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/9039.pdf> (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

judicial and legal activities in 1999.⁵ Each prison cell costs \$100,000 to build, plus we spend at least \$20,000 annually to house, feed, and guard each inmate.⁶ Prisons have become one of the fastest growing items in state budgets, siphoning off dollars that might otherwise be available for schools, roads, or hospitals.

Offenders are often sentenced for years to overcrowded prisons where they are exposed to the horrors of violence including homosexual rape, isolation from family and friends, and despair. Instead of working on the outside to repay their victims and support their families, many non-dangerous offenders are idle in prison; warehoused with little preparation to make better choices when they return to the free world. Upon leaving prison they will have great difficulty finding employment. The odds are great that their first incarceration will not be their last.

Our large investment in our prisons might be justified if the inmates released from them were reformed in hearts as well as habits. However, most inmates do not leave prison transformed into law-abiding citizens. In fact, the very skills inmates develop to survive inside prison make them anti-social when they are released. Prisons are, indeed, graduate schools of crime.

The statistics tell the story. A recent study by the Department of Justice Bureau of Statistics found that two out of three released inmates were rearrested within three years,⁷ victimizing more innocents in the process.

Over the last thirty years, the rate of rearrest has hovered stubbornly around sixty-seven percent as both the liberals and conservatives tried their solutions. Both approaches have failed to break the cycle of crime. Whether the therapeutic model or the tough-on-crime philosophy was guiding crime policy, the results have remained the same: more crime, more victims, and more prisons. If two-thirds of the patients leaving a hospital had to be readmitted soon thereafter, the public would quickly find a new place to be treated.

5. SIDRA LEA GIFFORD, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, JUSTICE EXPENDITURE AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, 1999, at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/jeeus99.pdf> (last visited on Jan. 29, 2004) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

6. RYAN KING & MARC MAUER, THE SENTENCING PROJECT, STATE SENTENCING AND CORRECTIONS POLICY IN AN ERA OF FISCAL RESTRAINT 17 (2002), available at <http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/9091.pdf> (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

7. Patrick A. Langan & David J. Levin, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*, in BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS SPECIAL REPORT, at 1 (U.S. Dep't of Justice, NCJ 193427, 2002), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/rpr94.pdf> (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

III. WHY DOES THE CURRENT SYSTEM FAIL US?

Even more disturbing than our failing prisons is the fact that our criminal justice system marginalizes victims. Rather than focusing on the injured victim, the current system focuses on the broken law. The legal dimension of crime is certainly important. However, by focusing solely on the legal side of crime, we have missed the more important reality of crime—it injures people. The system should hold offenders accountable to repair the injuries they have caused. While our usual response of locking offenders in prison for a long sentence may limit their ability to harm other people, it does nothing to help the victim. Crime is more than law breaking and justice is more than punishment.

The reason that offenders are not held accountable to repay their victims is because our criminal justice system defines crime as an offense against the state, not against the victim. You can see this in the way criminal cases are titled: State v. Defendant.

Because crime has come to be defined as “law breaking” rather than “victim harming,” the purpose of criminal justice has come to be “maintaining order” by (1) punishing the offender for breaking the law and (2) ensuring that the offender does not break the law again. Where does that leave the victim? Out in the cold.

In most criminal proceedings, victims have no opportunity to confront the offender or work out a restitution agreement. The victim’s only role in most criminal proceedings is as a witness in the state’s case against the accused—a “prop” for the prosecution.

Confession and acceptance of responsibility by the offender are often punished by the system rather than rewarded, and any money collected from the offender usually goes to the state rather than the victim. In addition, the process ignores the long-term damage to the families of both the victim and the offender, as well as the crime’s ongoing impact on the community.

We must ask ourselves why we continue to expand a system that ignores the needs of victims, releases prisoners that are more dangerous than before they entered prison, fails to make our communities safer, and consumes an ever-increasing portion of our tax dollars. Einstein has been quoted as saying that repeating a process and expecting the results to be different is insanity.⁸ According to that definition, our current criminal policies are insane. Getting “tough” on crime has not worked.

8. See, e.g., Ask Jeeves, <http://web.ask.com/web?q=Einstein+quote+on+insanity&co=0&qsrc=0&askbutton.x=21&askbutton.y=11> (last visited on Mar. 22, 2004) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

Neither has being “understanding” of criminal behavior. It is time to get smart on crime.

IV. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: A BETTER WAY

Fortunately, a smarter way to deal with crime exists. It is called *Restorative Justice*. Restorative Justice focuses on the injured victim as well as the broken law, and seeks to heal those injuries and restore the right order for the community, rather than solely offering retribution.

Victims are involved and given a voice in every stage of the Restorative Justice process. Offenders are held accountable to make things right with their victims through restitution and victim-offender mediation. Restorative Justice recognizes that communities are also hurt by crime, and involves members of the community in determining the appropriate sanctions to be imposed, and in restoring offenders back into the community when they have paid the price for their crime. By working to repair the damage they have caused to their victims, families, and communities, offenders develop the sense of responsibility that is essential to leading a productive life upon their eventual return to society. Through these processes, Restorative Justice seeks to reintegrate both victim and offender as productive members of a safe community.⁹

Restorative Justice has its foundation in the Old and New Testament principles emphasizing the peace of the community, the needs and rights of victims, and the potential of every offender to experience redemption. Crime is seen as a rift in the *shalom* of a community—a breach in the right relationships among individuals, the community, and God. Under Restorative Justice the legal process seeks to mend those broken relationships, and thereby to restore the *shalom*, the right order, to the community.

Restorative Justice is not exclusively a Christian concept. Restorative practices are integral to many indigenous cultures around the world, among the Maoris in New Zealand, the Inuits in Canada, Native Americans in the United States, and tribal cultures throughout Africa. Restorative principles are the foundation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that has helped restore peace after decades of bloody conflict in South Africa.

9. For more information on Restorative Justice, see generally the Justice Fellowship website at <http://www.justicefellowship.org> (last visited Jan. 20, 2004) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

Restorative Justice is not merely a program; rather, it is a completely different paradigm for doing justice. In previous centuries, paradigm shifts have brought great human progress. When astronomers discovered that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the universe, the orbits of the planets were finally predictable. When scholars realized that the earth was round rather than flat, travel around the globe became possible without fear of falling off the edge of the earth. So, also, a paradigm shift in our criminal justice system will allow us to reverse the destructive cycle of crime and make our communities safer.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops summarized Restorative Justice beautifully in their recent letter on Justice: "We are convinced that our tradition and our faith offer better alternatives that can hold offenders accountable *and* challenge them to change their lives; reach out to victims *and* reject vengeance; restore a sense of community *and* resist the violence that has engulfed so much of our culture."¹⁰

V. CRIME IS A MORAL PROBLEM

To deal effectively with crime, we must first understand it. At its root, crime is a moral problem. Offenders make bad moral choices that result in harm to their victims. To break the cycle of crime, we must address this immoral behavior. There are not enough police officers to stop everyone tempted to do something bad from doing it; inmates must rely on inner restraint to keep from harming others. If inmates are to live healthy, productive, law-abiding lives when they return to their communities, we must equip them with moral standards to live up to and a worldview that explains why they should do so.

Job training and education alone will not transform an inmate from a criminal into a law-abiding citizen. For some inmates, such programs merely make them smarter, more sophisticated criminals. It is a changed heart that can transform a prisoner into a law-abiding citizen. Unfortunately, many prison programs ignore the moral aspect of crime and avoid all discussion of faith and morality. In doing so, they are missing a significant factor that has proven effective at changing criminals' behavior—faith.

10. United States Catholic Bishops, *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice* (2000), available at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/criminal.htm> (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

VI. FAITH WORKS

Most people assume that faith is encouraged in prison. We certainly did when we worked inside the government. Yet, when we were incarcerated we found the opposite was true. It puzzled us. One would assume that wardens, even if they were atheists, would encourage inmates to be involved in religious activities. After all, if a corrections officer saw a group of inmates coming across the yard, would not it make a difference if the officer knew they were coming from Bible study?

While there are many corrections officials who do encourage religious involvement and welcome religious volunteers, many others do not. The public loses out when faith is ignored. Several studies have documented the significant role that faith can play in helping inmates turn their lives around.

The American Psychological Association recently reported that “among people recovering from substance abuse, a new study finds that higher levels of religious faith and spirituality were associated with several positive mental health outcomes, including more optimism about life and higher resilience to stress, which may help contribute to the recovery process.”¹¹

One review of the literature about the impact of religion on rehabilitation found that religious programs combat the negative effects of prison culture and that religious volunteers are a largely untapped resource pool available to administer educational, vocational, and treatment services at little or no cost.¹²

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University released a two-year study that found that “tapping the power of God, religion and spirituality has enormous potential for lowering the risk of substance abuse among teens and adults and, when combined with professional treatment, for promoting recovery.”¹³

11. Press Release, American Psychological Association, Religious Faith and Spirituality May Help People Recover From Substance Abuse (August 2000) available at <http://www.apa.org/releases/faith.html> (last visited Jan. 20, 2004) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

12. Byron R. Johnson & David B. Larson, *Linking Religion to the Mental and Physical Health of Inmates: A Literature Review and Research Note*, AMERICAN JAILS, Sept./Oct. 1997, at 28.

13. National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, <http://www.casacolumbia.org/pdshopprov/shop/item.asp?itemid=16> (advertising NAT'L CTR. ON ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AT COLUMBIA UNIV., SO HELP ME GOD: SUBSTANCE ABUSE, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY (2001)) (last visited Feb. 2, 2003) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

In another study, the Templeton Foundation funded a four-year recidivism research project by the National Institute of Healthcare Research to study inmates in four New York prisons. This study concluded that after controlling for level of involvement in Prison Fellowship-sponsored programs, prisoners who attended ten or more Prison Fellowship programs each year (those most active in Bible studies) were significantly less likely to be rearrested during the follow-up period.¹⁴

VII. PUTTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TO WORK INSIDE PRISONS

For years, Prison Fellowship desired a way to apply the principles of Restorative Justice in a prison setting in which the inmates' involvement with their faith would be for more than one hour a week. We sought an opportunity to immerse inmates in a healthy, moral environment in which they could learn their responsibilities to their victims, their spouses, their children, their employers, and their communities. We wanted the chance to help prisoners apply their faith to the real life challenges that would face them upon release from prison.

In such a prison, we envisioned recruiting mentors from local churches who would establish a relationship with the prisoners inside prison, and be there to walk out the prison gate with them, welcome them back to the community, assist them in locating employment, introduce them to their church, help them think through the challenges of transition from prison, and hold them accountable to walk the straight path.

In 1997, we got that opportunity when Texas's then-Governor George W. Bush agreed to let us establish such a program in a wing of a prison outside Houston. Thus, the InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI)¹⁵ was born. IFI is now operating in Texas, Kansas, Iowa, and Minnesota. The results have far exceeded our expectations.

In the IFI program, offenders are immersed daily in value-based teachings grounded in a biblical perspective and are required to work and improve their education. The second half of the program includes six months of community service outside the prison. While they are in prison, inmates are paired with a mentor from a local church who works with them on

14. Byron R. Johnson et al., *Religious Programs, Institutional Adjustment, and Recidivism Among Former Inmates in Prison Fellowship Programs*, 14 JUST. Q. 145, 155-57 (1997).

15. For more information on IFI, see their website at <http://www.ifiprison.org> (last visited Jan. 30, 2004) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

developing life skills to prepare them for life in the free world. The program continues after the inmate is released with continued guidance from their mentor, along with support from a local church.

As we developed the IFI program, we sought to allay any First Amendment concerns. We carefully constructed the program so that Prison Fellowship pays for the parts of the program that are explicitly religious with private funding; participation in IFI is voluntary and open to inmates of all faiths; participants have no time taken off their sentences for participating and are given no other incentives to participate. In fact, unlike other prisoners, IFI participants cannot watch TV except on weekends.

An important part of the IFI curriculum is Sycamore Tree, a program in which victims of crime tell the inmates the pain caused by their crime. While these are not the actual victims of the inmates' crimes, for many of the inmates, this is the first time they have had to face the fact that they have actually harmed someone. By hearing these stories, many are brought to the point of remorse. The inmates are encouraged to make things right with their actual victims, and when their victims are willing, to seek their forgiveness. The stories of remorse, forgiveness, and reconciliation that have occurred at IFI are very powerful. Victims tell us that this process is far more healing than the traditional court processes.

VIII. PROVEN RESULTS

Dr. Byron Johnson of the University of Pennsylvania recently conducted research on the graduates of IFI-Texas. Dr. Johnson's study followed IFI graduates for two years after their release and compared them to inmates with similar backgrounds and offenses who had not participated in IFI. The study found that:

- InnerChange Freedom Initiative graduates were two times less likely to be rearrested. The two-year post-release rearrest rate among InnerChange Freedom Initiative program graduates in Texas is 17.3%, compared with 35% of the matched comparison group.¹⁶
- InnerChange Freedom Initiative graduates were two-and-a-half times less likely to be re-incarcerated. The two-year post-release reincarceration rate among

16. BYRON R. JOHNSON & DAVID B. LARSON, THE INNERCHANGE FREEDOM INITIATIVE: A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF A FAITH-BASED PRISON PROGRAM 19 (2003), available at <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/innerchange.pdf> (last visited Jan. 20, 2004) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

InnerChange Freedom Initiative program graduates in Texas is 8%, compared with 20.3% of the matched comparison group.¹⁷

These findings present significant implications for our communities. Fred Becker, the first warden at IFI-Texas, noting that “all but one thousand of Texas’s 143,000 prisoners have an eventual release date,” stated, “It’s up to us to determine what kind of shape they come back to the world in. . . . If we can stop only ten percent of those inmates from re-offending, it will mean thousands of citizens who never become victims of crime. InnerChange is a step in that direction.”¹⁸

From his interviews with the IFI participants, Dr. Johnson identified five “themes” that are associated with successful rehabilitation, each one of them a part of the IFI teaching:

- a willingness to condemn their previous behavior;
- recognition that life is a “work in progress” and that spiritual growth is a lifelong process;
- replacing the values of prison society with something more worthwhile;
- developing a sense of hope and purpose; and
- sensing the need to give back to society.¹⁹

One does not have to be a believer in the power of faith to appreciate the benefits that IFI is providing to the community: fewer victims, safer neighborhoods, reduced court cases, and fewer prisoners. In an editorial entitled *Jesus Saves*, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote, “Critics of the faith-based approach may claim that their only issue is with religion. But if these results are any clue, increasingly the argument against such programs requires turning a blind eye to science.”²⁰

IX. MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS ARE CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

Dr. Johnson emphasized that mentors were “absolutely critical” to the impressive results.²¹ The support and accountability provided by mentors often make the difference between a successful return to society and re-offending. As these offenders make the difficult transition back into the community, they need

17. *Id.*

18. Kyle Johnson, *From Razor Wire to Revelation: Reforming Convicts Through Scripture*, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, Dec. 30, 1998, available at <http://search.csmonitor.com/durable/1998/12/30/p3s1.htm> (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

19. *Id.* at 25–31.

20. Editorial, *Jesus Saves*, WALL STREET J., June 20, 2003, at W15.

21. Johnson & Larson, *supra* note 12, at 33.

relationships with caring, moral adults. The greater the density of good people we pack around them, the greater the chance that they will be successfully replanted back into the community.

Moving from the very structured environment of prison, in which they had virtually no control over any aspect of their lives, inmates returning to their community face a myriad of options and temptations. Such basic decisions as where to sleep, where to seek employment, and with whom to associate confront them the minute they hit the street. They need the love, advice, and encouragement of a mentor. And they need someone to hold them accountable.

The numbers bear stark witness to the importance of inmates maintaining their relationships with their mentors; only inmates who completed the entire program (including continuing their work with their mentors after release) were less likely to recidivate.²² Those who left the program early had recidivism rates that were virtually the same as those who did not participate in the program at all.²³ Mere participation in a portion of IFI is insufficient to transform most inmates.²⁴

The most effective mentoring relationships begin while the offender is in prison, where the mentor and offender can develop rapport. IFI recruits members of local churches to give at least one hour a week to mentor the IFI inmates, both while they are still incarcerated and after they return to their community. In his interviews with the IFI participants, Dr. Johnson found that the mentors' weekly visits were very important to the inmates. "Without exception, IFI participants have indicated the critical impact volunteers have made in their lives. The sincerity and time commitment of volunteers has simply overwhelmed program participants."²⁵ The benefit of these relationships with their mentors derives not only from the things discussed, but also from the love conveyed. By faithfully keeping their commitment to the weekly mentoring sessions, the mentors show a commitment to the inmates that many have never experienced before in their lives. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "[w]hom you would change, you must first love, and they must know that you love them."²⁶

22. *Id.* at 19.

23. *Id.*

24. *Id.* at 17.

25. *Id.* at 24.

26. Geraldine Hawkins, *Harvard Law School Told Democrats Shackled to Pro-Abortion Lobby*, MASS. NEWS, May 12, 2003, at http://www.massnews.com/2003_Editions/5_May/051203_mn_democrats_shackled_to_pro_abortion_lobby.

By holding offenders accountable to “make things right” with their victims, challenging them to change their lives, and by connecting them with a mentor to assist them as they return to their community, IFI is the embodiment of principles of Restorative Justice.

X. THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

IFI is also a wonderful example of Christians shaping our culture. The scourge of crime deeply scars our communities, and through IFI Christians apply their faith to heal victims, reform the hearts of offenders, and make their neighborhoods safer.

These at-risk men and women benefit tremendously from loving relationships with their mentors. As President Bush has said, “government can hand out money. But government cannot put hope in people’s hearts. It cannot put faith in people’s lives. And faith is a powerful—faith is a powerful motivator.”²⁷ Members of the church must be prepared to undertake this role, and government officials should welcome their help.

One judge that attended Justice Fellowship’s National Forum on Restorative Justice emphasized the importance of being able to rely on the Church to help inmates, “I can ‘pitch’ offenders toward the Church every day of the year, but to make it work I need ‘catchers’ to receive them and work with them.”²⁸ With the over 600,000 inmates set to be released from our prisons this year,²⁹ it is critical that government and the church team up to help them successfully transition back into the community. IFI and similar programs provide the credibility of proven results so that the secular world can “pitch” the inmates to us with confidence that the Church will provide loving mentors and a welcoming community of believers to “catch” them.

shtml (last visited Feb. 2, 2004) (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

27. President George W. Bush, Speech to Community Leaders in Los Angeles (Apr. 29, 2002), *available at* <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/04/20020429-7.html> (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

28. Statement made to Pat Nolan by a judge at the Justice Fellowship National Forum on Restorative Justice (1999).

29. President George W. Bush, State of the Union Address (Jan. 20, 2004), *available at* <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040120-7.html> (on file with the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy).

XI. A VISION FOR PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES

For over thirty years, America has waged a losing battle against crime. We are two battle-hardened veterans of that struggle who have had the opportunity of seeing it from both sides of the battle. We have seen why our current efforts are failing, and we have seen that Restorative Justice does work: for victims, offenders, and the community. It is time America got smart on crime.

We are often asked what America's communities would look like if Restorative Justice were to be implemented. Such a "vision statement" for our communities was written by God long ago in Isaiah 32:18, "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest."³⁰

30. *Isaiah 32:18* (New International Version).

