

To the Confronting Conditions of Confinement

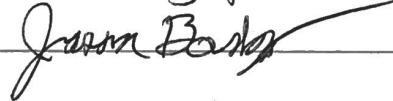
Team:

I would like to start by thanking you for the opportunity to tell some of my story. Even after all these years some of this story is difficult to tell. I would apologize up front, my punctuation and grammar could be improved.

I hope there are things in here that can be useful and in some way help. I would also like to add my sister has expressed interest in participating in your program. In closing if there are any questions you have about the things I talked about or additional information please feel free to ask. I will do my best in providing this information.

Sincerely

Jason Badgley #531117



My name is Jason Lee Badgley. I was born in Lapeer Mi. on December 08, 1976. I am currently residing at Lakeland Correctional Facility serving a 34 to 60 year sentence for second degree murder. This is my attempt at telling some of my story.

I don't remember anything from the time I lived in the Lapeer area with my mom and dad. My parents separated while I was very young and I really can't remember a time when they were together. I was raised by my father, his parents and his sister. My earliest memories are living in my aunt's basement. My dad spent a little over four hours round trip going to work and back so he was gone a lot. But he did it because he thought that was what was best for me.

After some time dad was able to transfer to an office closer to home. Shortly after that we moved to our own place. Over the years we moved a few times but always stayed in the same general area. Since there are not many people that would recognize the towns we lived in I'll name the only town of any size in that area. We lived primarily in the Bad Axe Mi. area. It's a very rural area, mostly agriculture and small factories.

It was a quiet place to grow up. Removed from all the crime you would typically see in the more urban areas. For the most part people looked out for each other and treated each other with respect. It was a good place to grow up. Maybe that's why my dad chose such a difficult life with all the hours on the road. He even turned down promotions to raise me there surrounded by family.

But as I grew older I struggled. As a teenager I was angry about everything. From the fact I needed a mom actually there helping me understand all this confusing stuff or comforting me when I was sad and encouraging me when I felt like a failure. Because I didn't have these things and I didn't know how to deal with them, I turned to alcohol and drugs as an escape. This lifestyle became addictive, the adrenaline of the game. I knew the things I became involved in was illegal but I rationalized it by saying what I did wasn't hurting anyone. That was how I justified my lifestyle.

Over the years I moved several times. The first couple places I was really just trying to make a fresh start. I had gained a reputation in my small community and I thought the only way I was going to avoid going back to jail would be relocating to the city where I was just another face. So I moved around in the Warren, Macomb County area. It was alright, plenty of clubs and parties. I stayed with friends that I knew from back home. They had moved there over many of the same issues I had. But in time I was arrested for a marijuana charge and had to move back home to avoid a stay in Macomb County Jail.

By this time I had quite a bit of experience with the criminal justice system. In every one of those experiences except the first one I was knowingly committing a criminal act with no regard for the consequences or how my actions could affect others. But my first experience, I was 16 and at this time not a bad kid. I was stopped

by a police officer over a crack in my windshield and told if I didn't tell him who was selling drugs in town he would write me a ticket. Well I didn't provide him with any information, I didn't know any and he didn't write the ticket. But I remember how that made me angry, I felt disrespected.

At some point after that I started drinking regularly and living a much wilder lifestyle. Between the ages of 18 and around 23 I had been charged and found guilty of around 4 drinking and driving offenses along with around another 4 drug charges. None of those ended up being felony convictions but they did result in several short stays in the county jail. At this point in my life none of that really did anything to deter me or make me consider changing my lifestyle. Instead I would try to think of ways I wouldn't get caught.

It became like a challenge, a game of chess. Sometimes you would make the wrong move and find yourself back in court, that's just the way it was. In the end the police were just doing their jobs. Then in an attempt to do something ~~right~~^{right} with my life I moved to Nashville TN to enroll in a trades school. After completing their program and earning top honors I moved back home.

After moving back home a sequence of events happened that changed everything in my life. I met this amazing woman named Vicki and fell in love. Everything changed, all of a sudden there was this person in my life that I would lay down my life for, was responsible for. She had a little 5 year old boy that looked up to me. I wanted to be a good father, I

wanted to be better than my father.

Recognizing the lack of employment opportunities in the area my father helped us move to the Utica area in Macomb County. I tried to do everything right but at the time I couldn't see that I was actually doing everything wrong. I had become addicted to Oxycodon and used it continuously to push myself harder and further trying to pay the bills, take care of Devin (Vicky's little boy) and Vicky who was pregnant with our child. I pushed myself to the point I broke. So many mistakes, all of which lead to my 1 month old son passing away over one bad decision. For me that was the end, my world came crashing down and my family was left in pieces.

The first few years of my incarceration was hard. I was dealing with so much loss and pain. I struggled with the emotional pain of losing so much and hurting so many of the people I loved. The pain I felt knowing I caused the death of my infant son, hurt so many people I loved and destroyed my family brought me to the breaking point. It was at this point that I turned to God. The burden I carried, the pain, the guilt and regret was just too much. For Vicky, my mom, my daughter and my sisters I had to find help. I cried out to God and he helped me through that period of my life.

After being incarcerated a couple years I transferred to Huron Valley Men's Correctional Facility in Ypsilanti Mi. I started working in the kitchen. Because I didn't really deal with all the things I had been going through, all those things began to re-surface. As time progressed I buried

myself in work and other routines. I drank and used pills to numb the pain. I had bad days here and there, primarily due to loved ones passing away or some other bad news from home. But I used work, routine and different substances as a way to escape thinking about anything. That's how I survived for a little over 12 years.

Over the last few years a lot of things changed. This happened after I transferred to Lakeland Cor. Facility. I participated in several uncredited educational courses facilitated by an instructor from Western Michigan. These courses inspired me, causing me to want to be more. To challenge myself and make a difference in someone's life. I'm still taking those courses and they helped me become a better person. I realized that in order to grow I have to be willing to deal with all these things I had buried.

So that's what I did and now I've been blessed with the opportunity to get a degree through a Christian University in counseling and I may have another opportunity to earn an associate degree through the second chance pell program. Now instead of surviving in prison by burying things, I work through those feelings from my past. I find my joy, or at least as much joy as can be expected, by building a strong relationship with God, being there for my family in every way I can and continuing to learn and grow as an individual. This gives my life meaning.

The toughest part about living in prison is being separated from all the people you love. It's feeling useless, helpless to do anything. I once recieved a message on my

I pay account from my daughter simply asking me to call. When I did I spent the next half an hour doing my best to comfort her while she cried. I couldn't hold her or do anything to physically offer her comfort. All I could do was listen and offer words of support.

I've lost every one of my immediate family members on my father's side since I became incarcerated. These are the people that raised me and I couldn't be there to hold their hand or even say good bye. These are the things that hurt. It's not losing the material things or things like privacy, even your freedom. It's being taken away from the people you care so much about that hurts the most.

The daily routine of living in prison is something you get used to. You adapt and adjust. It's human nature and part of how you succeed in here or out there. Some people get so adapted to living in here they become institutionalized. What this means to me is life in prison is the only life you know. I've been blessed to have the support of my family, friends and my community. Their support and involvement in my life over the last 16 years has kept me grounded, reminded me this place is only temporary and that there are a lot of people out there that care about me and believe in me. I've maintained those ties throughout the years through the mail, phone, pay and visits.

The living conditions at most of the facilities I've stayed at has been generally the same. The quality of the food fluctuates from one prison to another but typically speaking over the last few years the food has become

less than desirable. I've always been able to secure a job. Most of the time that job payed enough to support my basic financial needs. In times of emergency or I may need a little financial help because my job didn't pay enough, I've always had the support of my family.

I don't really have any extensive experience dealing with the Health care services in prison. But I've seen several people misdiagnosed leading to serious health issues, even death. It doesn't seem like anyone's really held accountable when this happens. Given my age and the number of years I have left to serve the quality of the health care we receive in prison is something I've thought about.

I've been fortunate enough to participate in several programs. Such as several non-credited courses through Sienna Heights University, one of them was part of what's called an inside out program. This involves students from the university coming into the prison to take a class with students in the prison. I participated in these programs while I resided in Gus Harrison Corr. facility, Adrian Mi. Currently I am in Lakeland Corr. facility in Coldwater and I've been fortunate enough to take several non-credited courses being offered in Ethics. These courses are being taught by instructors from Western Michigan. It was through my participation in these courses that inspired me to be more, to face the things I had tried to bury and through it all grow. It was those courses that helped me find my way back to God and inspired me to write this.

These educational and skilled trades training programs improve the living conditions of the facilities. It does this by changing the perception many inmates have about themselves and the people around them. It gives inmates goals and encourages growth. It creates a much more productive environment instead of a destructive one. Unfortunately it's only been the last couple facilities I've resided in that offered programs like these.

Over time being incarcerated has affected me in many ways. Some of the ways it affects you are unconscious, part of adapting and adjusting. Other things can be intentional. For instance I use to be an outgoing, social person but because of the environment I'm in I've become more anti-social. Quite often I find I would rather limit my social interaction to a couple people.

I've also grown a lot. Being isolated from everything going on gives me the opportunity to really reflect, helping me understand my strengths and weaknesses. Because of this my incarceration has led to personal and spiritual growth.

I now understand that from the beginning my actions affected more than just me. The depth of the pain I caused my father and the rest of my family is beyond anything I can say. Now many of them are gone. I wish I had one more chance to make them proud, show them the person I could of been. I was selfish, so caught up on how I saw things and the things I experienced. I couldn't see how my actions affected those around me.

Looking back I no longer see my old lifestyle as a game.

I see it as throwing away the opportunity to really make a difference, I see a thousand mistakes and the immeasurable amount of pain I caused. I see it as failing to be a good son, grandson, father, brother and friend. I also see where I'm at now. I can't change the mistakes I made in the past and won't let them define who I am today. But I will learn from them and be the best son, father, brother and friend possible regardless whether I am in here or out there.

I believe there are many ways the criminal justice system is failing to fulfill its moral and ethical duties to the communities it's suppose to protect and to those who have committed a crime. Looking back to my early teenage years I really didn't have any feelings one way or another about the legal system. After experiencing it I realized most of the time the legal system is about money. This system is suppose to treat everyone equally regardless of race, gender or how much money you have. It didn't take me long to realize the legal system usually doesn't work that way. This leads directly to many people that don't have power, influence or money getting unfair treatment and in some cases unnecessarily being incarcerated.

In my opinion the way the criminal justice system currently operates is through a retributive or punitive justice system. This system isn't designed to prepare people to be productive members of society upon release. It's designed to punish and use tickets as a way of population or social control. This system does very little in protecting the public because many of those people that end up

incarcerated are released basically the same if not worse than they were before. Where is the balance between restorative and punitive justice? If we want to protect our communities there needs to be a different approach.

We need to stop warehousing offenders and recognize a criminal act is really a symptom of a larger problem. There needs to be a focus on how to treat offenders. This should involve real investment into programs that will inspire change in those incarcerated. Most of those people incarcerated will go home. Either the system will choose to invest in them when they become incarcerated, tailoring programs towards their specific needs, Or throw them in a couple classes towards the end of their sentence and hope for the best. The criminal justice system needs to view offenders as complex individuals. They need to require that offenders see counselors so programs can be tailored towards the things that caused that person to turn to crime.

To sum it up there must be a penalty for violating the law. I believe the criminal justice system should be shaped according to the Rational/Legalism Orientation Criminological Theory. I also believe in order for society to function properly we must all accept that we are part of a social contract. Part of that social contract is that there is a governing body that has the power and authority to enforce the laws necessary to protect society.

But at some point the state has to expand how it sees crime. Instead of reacting to crime start looking at most crime as just a symptom of a bigger problem and start

taking the steps necessary to address those root causes that's behind crime. By understanding why individuals are violating the law the system will be better equipped to provide structured programs around the individual that will help the person grow and become a better person. Thereby restoring the balance between retributive and restorative justice.