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## Released Inmates Need Education To Fully Use Their Right To Vote

Robert Woodard | Posted: Tuesday, November 10, 2015 12:00 am

There will be a release of 6,112 inmates by the Department of Justice. Just think about it, an inmate when in prison loses his right to be a citizen that votes. He or she now will become “property of the state.” Many of these prisoners graduated from public schools and did not receive a quality education. Hence, the power of citizenship cannot be exercised fairly by an undereducated person.

There are many American citizens that are not able to navigate in this complex political atmosphere. If we as Americans don't do something about the crime of undereducation, we will become a manufacturing industry of prisons. The prison system is all about recidivism. Recidivism keeps the prison population of residents flourishing. By being in prison, your voting rights are immediately relinquished. The least we can do as a nation is to prepare the undereducated to become educated enough to make a proper decision when voting. There's a process for inmates to regain their right to vote once they're freed from prison. What good is your right to vote as a citizen, if you are not educated enough to know what you're voting for?

If we as citizens of a free and fair society want to live in a safe environment, we must make sure that these undereducated inmates, in our prisons, make that change.

From being undereducated to becoming educated is the change. Our public school systems all over this country, have graduated many students, who are unprepared to make an honest living, in which many of them have reverted to selling drugs. Therefore, we as a nation are producing our own problem. Numerous crimes that we see in our streets today are committed by undereducated repeat offenders. Unfortunately, our inner cities are full of undereducated people who are continuing to play musical chairs with recidivism.

If we don't educate the undereducated, we will become a nation of prisons. I know we as citizens can do better than that. We can start by making sure no prisoner leaves prison without a competent first- to sixth-grade education, without computers or calculators, just good old-fashioned reading, writing and arithmetic, becoming the major focus.

If we do this as a correctional institution, we can motivate real change. Once inmates can read, write and count as well as a legitimate sixth-grader, they will then have the spark to get them started to receive and exercise their inalienable rights. We as citizens have and live in a great country, with great opportunities. The question becomes, “Are we a fair and unprejudiced nation?” I would have to say, “No.” Until we as Americans deal with the reality of the damages of slavery and face the horrible ravages that it has had on our country, also what it has done to the “children of slaves,” we will never be able to go forward fairly. And without equal opportunities for all, we will have nothing.

The Department of Justice is releasing 6,112 prisoners. The question becomes, “If these freed persons do not have the proper tools to become upstanding citizens, in their perspective communities, they can't exercise their right to stay free.” Recidivism will become repetitive without the presence of equal education for all people, Black or white, rich or poor. Making sure these inmates have these tools, America will be helping itself walk into a better future.

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