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OPINION

Creating a Justice System that Works for Everyone

Community supervisors play critical role

BY ERIKA PREUITT

In my 25 years working in the criminal justice system, I have seen the widespread impact extended jail stays have on individuals, families, and communities at-large – loss of employment and wages, disruption to families, and interruption to treatment and care for those who need it. What's more, the misuse and overuse of jail perpetuates racial disparities and can turn jails into warehouses for people suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues. Locking up people who pose limited or no risk to public safety comes at great cost with little benefit. This is not what jail was intended for. We can serve our



whole community better.

Monica's story is an example of the kind of success possible when we rethink how we use jails and direct resources to proven alternatives. Monica spent years struggling with addiction and cycling in and out of jail for drug-related offenses. Her time in jail forced her to miss birthdays, graduations, the birth of a grandchild, and other major life milestones. But today, she has been sober and out of jail for 16 years. She's a proud business-owner and dedicated years of her life to helping survivors of domestic violence.

Monica was determined to turn her life around, but she didn't do it alone. We know that for many people like Monica who come in contact with the justice system, the critical catalysts for change are dedicated probation officers and service providers who are in

unique positions to create lasting change in people's lives. In Monica's case, her probation/parole officer helped connect her with addiction treatment, job training, and peer support services, and played the role of mentor and cheerleader for her long-term success.

In Multnomah County and across the country, community supervision professionals are helping put people like Monica on better paths and break cycles of incarceration. We know community supervision can play an important role helping reduce rates of recidivism and over-incarceration. In Multnomah County, in 2017 the Department of Community Justice reduced jail bed use by an average of 62 beds per day and maintained recidivism rates below the state average by engaging in deliberate jail reduction strategies. We also know that, as in Monica's case, supervisors can be critical in connecting people with jail alternatives, such as treatment for sub-

stance abuse and mental health issues that have long-term impacts.

One such alternative service is soon to open in Multnomah County. As part of the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge, the county will soon open a new transitional housing facility for justice-involved women, with a particular focus on serving women of color.

The facility – named the Diane Wade House after the much beloved probation/parole officer who helped hundreds of women in her community, including Monica – will provide transitional housing for justice-involved women referred by the Department of Community Justice who are in need of mental health stability and support, as well as cognitive-behavioral and culturally-responsive curriculum day services for women from across the county. Programming will be Afrocentric, gender-specific, and trauma-informed to reflect people's lived

experiences and help reduce racial and gender disparities in our current system. The new facility is part of the county's overall goals to end jail overuse and misuse and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in our local justice system.

As jurisdictions like Multnomah County continue the necessary work of local justice system reform, community supervisors will continue to play important roles. This week is officially Pretrial, Probation, and Parole Supervision Week, a time to recognize the work these professionals do impacting people's lives, maintaining public safety, and creating a justice system that works for everyone. I encourage everyone to learn more about the work underway locally and across the country.

Erika Preuitt is deputy director of Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice's and president of the American Probation and Parole Association.

Employing the Tactic of Naming and Shaming

It works and should be continued

BY OSCAR H. BLAYTON

There was a reason Ku Klux Klan members wore hoods that hid their faces.

Anonymity allows people to act upon their worst instincts without having to suffer the consequences.

Southern bigots acted out their racial hatred as night riders and then resumed their roles as responsible doctors, policemen, judges and other model citizens the next day because no one knew who was behind the masks.

The Internet has given individuals similar anonymity, allowing trolls and haters to assume false or cloaked identities as they terrorize their victims in cyberspace.

There had always been a certain shame that attached to depraved acts of cruelty. Bullies and sadists did not want to be known for their true selves. If the world did not



know who they were, they could dress themselves in a suit of false rectitude and hypocritically wag their fingers at those they deem to be unfit.

Today, however, there is a new norm for bullying and sadism. Donald Trump has figuratively flung wide the gates of hell and all its minions have come spilling out. His cabinet is rife with villains determined to leave the entire Earth worse than when they found it. They appear to take joy in abusing the helpless and molesting the rights of people they consider unworthy.

Trump's lieutenants are so drunk with power they believe that through their lies they can support bigotry, greed and callousness with impunity. But recent events have shown that America has had enough of this bad behavior and will not allow it to be normalized.

In confronting Trumpism, we can all take a lesson from Emile Zola, the French journalist who in a famous 1898 commentary

titled "J'accuse" charged the French president and government with anti-Semitism because of a blatant case of injustice against a Jewish French military officer, Alfred Dreyfus. Dreyfus had been falsely accused and convicted of treason due to anti-Semitic sentiment in France at the time.

Zola's charge against the president and government of France spoke truth to power so forcefully that it started a groundswell of support for Dreyfus that led to his being released from prison and awarded a medal for having endured martyrdom.

This tactic of "Naming and Shaming" also has been used for years by Human Rights Watch to confront dictators and human rights violators around the world with an aim towards forcing them to stop their bad behavior. Now it is time to employ this tactic at home.

We know who the bad actors are, and we know what they are doing to enable a maniacal, power hungry demagogue who poses a threat, not only to this country, but to the world. The Nuremberg

Trials established the principle that individuals cannot escape the consequences of their actions by claiming that they were merely following orders, and Trump's minions cannot escape responsibility for their bad behavior by claiming they were only carrying out the president's wishes.

Among some Democrats who consider themselves to be progressive, there is strong support for the tactic of naming and shaming when used against foreign dictators and their enablers. But they appear to value civility over justice and wring their hands over the lack of decorum when it is used against Trump's enablers. These Democrats have turned on Congresswoman Maxine Waters of California and chided her for speaking truth to power when she called for all right-thinking Americans to confront Trump's enablers whenever they show their faces in public.

Those of us old enough to remember the Civil Rights Movement recall that Southern bigots and their enablers intoned in the 1960s how demonstrators lacked

civility and proposed proper decorum as the path to voting rights and equal justice when confronted with fire hoses, vicious police dogs and bludgeoning night sticks.

Only after it became clear that civil disobedience would persist until the humanity of people of color was recognized that America's political and cultural landscape began to change.

For anyone who has a love for humanity, White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders and the rest of Trump's hellish minions are not entitled to civility, regardless how many "white girl tears" they shed over being ejected from restaurants and other public places.

Shaming them is a tactic that works and should be continued, as it is quite possibly the way to bring America back to a sane path – the qualms of those who would abide tyranny for the sake of decorum notwithstanding.

Oscar H. Blayton is a former Marine Corps combat pilot and human rights activist who practices law in Virginia.

Letter to the Editor

Give Pot to Seniors

Recent news coverage has indicated that there is an oversupply of pot. Well many of us seniors grew up smoking the stuff. It was and is the only way we can cope with our vicious economy and the never ending increase in the cost

of living.

Some of us, like me, had to retire early because of drug testing. Many of us are physically and mentally impaired due to the stress and strain of working in our free enterprise economy. We live

near poverty.

Let seniors have the oversupply for free. We can no longer afford to live, and yes, we are addicted. Help us.

Bruce Badrick
Northeast Portland