

**From:** Dorothy Jones [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 21 January 2020 11:24 AM  
**To:** sentencingcouncil  
**Subject:** life sentencing

I wish to record my concerns about the current blanket rule regarding sentencing for life imprisonment. Serial killers, career criminals, serial rapists, terrorists and paedophiles should, in my view, be locked up forever with no hope of parole. These people have no chance of being rehabilitated and pose a perpetual and powerful threat to society. However, there are special circumstances viz. crimes of passion or one off lapses that could respond to rehabilitation and these prisoners could undergo treatment and be released on parole after serving a mandatory 12-20 years for their crimes. Many young people of high intelligence turn to crime because they lack the education or skills to do anything else.

As far back as the 1960s I visited a model prison in Kroonstad, South Africa (of all places!) Based on the Swedish model, the prison took only serious offenders. All prisoners were admitted as C grade prisoners which meant that they slept on mattresses on the floor and had very few visits from relatives. Privileges had to be earned through good behaviour and those who qualified were promoted to Class B. They slept in beds in smaller dormitories, were allowed more frequent visitors and enjoyed more privileges. Meanwhile all prisoners worked. They built and maintained the prison and its extensions, were trained in the building trade and its subsidiaries - plumbing, carpentry, painting, tiling electrical work, etc. and cleaned the prison themselves. The women in those days were taught sewing, crocheting and other gender based skills. Prisoners were allowed to sell their work and the money was kept to be paid to them on their release. There was a long waiting list for their hand made furniture, crocheted tablecloths and other products. The prison provided a night school for people who had not completed their education and some prisoners were able to study for university degrees by correspondence. Exceptional prisoners were promoted to Class A. These were housed in individual cubicles with a bed, a bedside table and were permitted to display a photograph of family members on their bedside tables. After 12 years these murderers, one off rapists, armed robbers etc. were released into society well equipped to find work and take their place amongst us. I understand that at that stage the prison had had only 2 prisoners revert to criminal ways after which they were locked up for life.

The prison also had its own small hospital with a nursery for children up to the age of 2 years. A few women would arrive at the prison pregnant, would give birth in the hospital and be permitted regular contact with their children for their first 2 years. Psychologists found that after that age, the children might be affected by the prison environment so the children were sent to live with their families outside. This allowed mother and child to bond, giving the prisoner an incentive to reform and eventually rejoin her child. Imagine the despair of Lindy chamberlain being parted from her baby at birth.

The prisoners formed their own brass band, allowing the musically inclined to express their talents.

Obviously times have changed. Skills are no longer gender based and we have to contend with drugs, mobile phones and computers that allow prisoners to continue running their crime empires from their cells. But the model is a good one that could be adapted to suit our modern world. e.g. Only A grade prisoners permitted internet access and mobile phones which would have to be under constant surveillance. Tighter control of drugs entering prisons would have to be implemented and more vigilant screening of visitors would have to be introduced. Most importantly, both men and women need work to give them purpose and a sense of achievement, self esteem has to be built from scratch. Intelligent people need to occupy their brains with study and the hope of a better life on release. Years ago while visiting Honolulu, I attended a talk by Chuck Norton, an American who had killed a man in a pub brawl and was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. While in prison he completed high school, obtained a masters degree in education and after his release dedicated himself to promoting the benefits of education to the public in general and to young delinquents in particular.

I trust you will consider what I have written and revise the laws making life sentences prolonged death sentences. Not everyone can be salvaged but some prisoners, at least, could be returned to society as useful members of the community.

Your sincerely,

Dorothy Jones

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