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## The Revolving Door of Recidivism

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Grace Veach

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### The Revolving Door of Recidivism

The problem of recidivism in the United States. will only improve when people care not only about themselves but also others. Recidivism is the act of a past criminal offender coming back into contact with the justice system. There are several definitions of recidivism, the most common and broadest being rearrest. Recidivism has been an issue for as long as prisons have been in use. Throughout the history of the American penal system, there have been numerous laws and acts created, some of which healed and some hurt. Some laws were made with a retributive mindset, some with a rehabilitative mindset. As the American culture has shifted to rehabilitative, many programs have been attempted. Despite the attempts to reduce recidivism, recidivism is still a perpetuating, pervasive, and perilous problem. Recidivism is not a new idea and it is not unique to the United States. Most academic and government officials would agree that the penal system needs to be altered. Recidivism is not declining because there is a lack of co-operation, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of action. The first step to reducing recidivism is convincing people to care.

The issue of what to do with criminals is an issue that has troubled nations for centuries. In the Bible, God's people, the Jews, were given laws and orders concerning this very issue. The punishments laid out there were all what is commonly referred to as corporal punishment, which is a physical punishment often preformed in front of other members of the community.

There was also the idea of financial punishments. The idea of financial punishments such as fines is still used today.

The last main idea is the idea of what is now called the penal system or prisons, which has been around a very long time. Evidence of ancient prisons have been found in China, Greece and Rome. The Chinese wrote a book filled with the laws regarding the treatment of those imprisoned in 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.. (Burkhead) The famous tale of Socrates includes a prison where he was being held at the time of his chosen death. The story of the crucifixion of Jesus from the Bible involves a Roman prison. Later in 211 AD, Ulpian, a Roman, wrote the laws for the Roman empire involving prisons. (Burkhead)

Previous to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, prisons were mainly used for temporary holding until a appropriate punishment could be decided. Starting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, people believed that prison had the potential to improve criminals. In 1576 Queen Elizabeth I of England, declared that every county was required by law to have a house of corrections. The purpose of these houses was to reduce the corporal punishment used, put criminals to work, teach them a trade, and restore their dignity. Over time, these houses were abandoned in favor of corporal punishment. (Burkhead)

The Dutch were a crucial turning point in the judiciary system. In 1588, the current punishment for thieves was execution. Responding to this law and the changing belief of the day, a Dutch court refused to sentence a 16-year-old to execution for stealing. (Burkhead) What came out of that was a system of prisons for minor offenders. The men and women were separated into different houses and taught a trade. As this idea developed, many people had a hand in the development of what they believed to be a more humane system.

One extremely influential person was John Howard, an English sheriff. Seeking a better solution than mercilessly beating criminals, he traveled all of England and some foreign lands to examine prisons. The result of his searching was published in 1777. (Burkhead) The book enlightened the conditions of prisons across England and how to improve them. The book stated that moral reformation was a crucial part of beneficial confinement. John Howard also coined the word "penitentiary," which we still use today. Another influential person was Alexander Maconochie, who was under the authority of England and was the founder of the Marks system. (Fitch) The Marks system was an attempt to combine the goals of punishment and rehabilitation. A major part of the system were programs that, if completed, would reduce the sentence. As a result of the Marks system, work came to be believed to be an essential part or rehabilitation.

In America, William Penn had a major influence on the trajectory of the American penal system. He was an English governor that was established by the King of England. He was over what is now Pennsylvania. As governor, he wrote a charter. Within the charter, he established jails as a means of punishing lesser crimes and was a strong proponent for hard labor. He also formed the system of trial by peers that is used today. (Depersis)

One of the first state uses of prisons was recorded in Philadelphia. It was started in 1790 by the Quakers. (Depersis) This system used solitary confinement and hard work in an attempt to both punish and rehabilitate prisoners. In 1816, the Auburn system was built in America, which implemented communal work and silence. (Depersis) These prisons formed the foundation and examples of basic prisons that were used throughout America and the a large part of the world.

In the 1850s, the goal of rehabilitation was finally sought after on a national scale. Samuel Gridley Howe is often accredited as having a major influence in the United States. In the 1847, he developed the idea that prisoners could be changed for the better through using morals and teaching self-government. (Fitch) However, the belief that people could be changed was, for a long time, not recognized and fully accepted. America prisons were surveyed by Enoch Wines and Theodore Dwight and the result of that survey was a report published in 1867. (Fitch) The report found that, while in thought America wanted to rehabilitate criminals, in practice no prisons have the primary goal of rehabilitation. Another shaper of the penal system was Zebulan Brockway. He was a strong reformist and believed in rehabilitation. In 1876, he was made warden of a prison in New York. (Fitch) While warden, he started the first American major educational reform. Like most of what is American, American prisons are a combination of many systems from many countries. Throughout the development of the United States' prison system, the most popular purpose of prisoners' sentence altered from holding to punishment to rehabilitation.

Many laws and acts are guiding the progress and shifting of the current American penal system. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 was signed by President Clinton. It banned prisoners from ever receiving college funding through the Pell Grant, even after they have been released. As a result, there was a major drop in the education levels of prisoners. This drop in education levels led to further limiting former inmates' ability to be employed for better jobs, which provide better money. This law is an example of a law that was a response to the shift in public thinking from rehabilitative to retributive. This law is still in effect, but recently there has been a push to remove this law.

The Second Chance Act of 2007 provided federal funding for both state and federal reentry programs. The Second Chances Act also changed the requirements for grant recipients and placed new requirements on the effectiveness of reentry programs. (United States) This law was an example of a rehabilitative law. The Second Chances Act of 2007 resulted in an increase of studies and surveys. It also increased the number of reentry programs that states could afford. This act expired in 2010.

In December of 2018, the First Steps Act was signed into law by President Trump. There are three major parts to the First Steps Act. The first major part of the First Steps Act is the formation of a risks and needs assessment system. The second major part is a change in the sentencing for some of the federal offences. The third major part is a reauthorization of the Second Chance Act of 2007. (United States, Congress, James Nathan) The risks and needs assessment system provides a system to pair offenders with programs that will actually address the offenders' needs. The new sentencing laws gives more sentencing freedom to judges. It is a recognition of the current cultural belief that not all people are the same, and therefore should receive different consequences. It also comes from the belief that by reducing mass incarceration, recidivism and our current legal issues will be reduced. The reauthorization of the Second Chances Act of 2007 illustrates a continued effort to understand recidivism. The First Steps Act is an example of a law seeking rehabilitative system.

Over the course of prisons in the United States, many different programs have been used to reduce recidivism. Recidivism means past offenders coming back into contact with the justice system. Programs aimed at reducing recidivism are often called recidivism reduction

programs. These programs are often sorted into several common categories. The first main category is education programs.

Educational programs include academic programs. GED preparation and secondary education are types of academic programs. Some academic programs use peer-to-peer tutoring, outside tutoring, and some use a class room style. However, educational programs are not only academic. Cognitive behavioral training is also considered educational. Cognitive behavioral therapy seeks to retrain the brain to think differently when faced with a problem. One main type of cognitive behavioral therapy is moral development. Moral development seeks to teach a moral or faith-based response to problems. Educational programs also include emotion management, civic training, multidiscipline and vocational programs. Multidiscipline programs teach responsibility, discipline, and commitment. Vocational training teaches career preparation and skills in order to reduce unemployment. (Finch, p.188)

Other non-educational programs include monetary management, addiction treatment, mental help, housing, and family relationship training. Many of these non-educational programs are paired together to form a stronger program. One of the most common non-educational programs is addiction treatment. Most family relationship training is offered only for female prisoners with children.

There are many different types of programs that all seek to reduce recidivism. They all are based off of a statistic common to many prisoners. They all use what they believe to be a factor of recidivism. For example, many prisoners have a low education level and did not graduate high school. As a result, there are many education programs seeking to raise the

educational proficiency of prisoners. The types of programs have changed and shifted for almost as long as there have been prisons.

Recidivism is detrimental to United States and should not be ignored or considered a lesser problem. Recidivism is a perpetuating problem. In a study published in 2012, prisoners released from a St. Louis prison were studied. The study found that substance abuse, antisocial behavior, length of incarceration and criminal history, poverty, and no high school diploma increased the risk of recidivism. (Wikoff) Another study evaluated Minnesota release violators and found that lack of long-term housing, economic instability, lack of transportation, and bad family relationships to be risk factors for recidivism. (McNeeley) The UNITED STATES.'s system does not fix any of these problems and in some cases perpetuates them.

When released from prison into the community, most released prisoners return to the same place they left. This causes them to encounter the same triggers and reasons that prompted them to commit a crime. This is especially a problem when released prisoners were members of a gang. Often, gang members return to gang related crimes. However, in order to be eligible for certain reentry programs, offenders have to return to the city they were living at the time of the crime.

The American people and the legal system often make successful reentry difficult. Former inmates face legal barriers to their full return to the community. For example, sex offenders cannot live within so many miles of a school or daycare, regardless of whether their crime involved children at all. This law has the unintended consequence of making cheap, good housing difficult to find for sex offenders. In a testimony given to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Amy Solomon addresses this issue. She said that there are "more than

38,000 statutes that impose collateral consequences on people convicted of crimes, creating barriers to jobs, housing, benefits and voting. More than 80 percent of the statutes operate as a denial of employment opportunities.” (Solomon) She goes on to state that while some are necessary, some of the statutes are not doing any good. These 38,000 statutes represent just some of the legal barriers that ex-offenders face.

Former inmates also face stigma from other members of the community. People in the community often discover that they have a record and assume certain things about them. People often assume that prisoners are lazy, cheating, dishonest people that can never do anything good. This stigma forms a society where ex-offenders struggle in a community to successfully integrate. Employers also share a distrust of released prisoners. In a Minnesota reentry program, it was found that less than half of the participants were employed after eight months. (McNeeley) Employment is often cited as lowering the risk of recidivism and is considered important for the full reentry of prisoners.

In an article published by the RAND cooperation, it was stated that 174 current occupations typically have an entry level of a bachelors’ and that the number of jobs requiring a bachelors’ will only increase. (Davis) Even jobs that do not require a bachelors’ do require a high school diploma. According to a PIAAC report published in 2016, 30% of inmates lack a high-school diploma or equivalent. It also found that about half of prisoners had low levels of numeracy. Only about 10% of prison jobs involve the use of a computer, leaving most prisoners without any computer or technology skills. In a world filled with technology, a basic understanding of how to use a computer is a necessary part of thriving. This lack of an adequate education is a proven risk to offenders. In a study conducted by the RAND cooperation, a higher

education level was found to lower the risk of recidivism by 43%. (Davis) America's system makes it very difficult for former offenders to further their education. They also face struggles in obtaining a degree because they are currently not eligible for the Pell Grant.

Most recidivated criminals have experienced at least one reentry program if not more. It has been suggested by Douglas Marlowe that these repeat offenders develop a jaded view of reentry programs. He contends that this jaded view creates prisoners who are not engaged in the programs they entered. He uses Project Greenlight as evidence. Project Greenlight uses family counseling sessions to help prisoners in the process of reentry. Only 15% of enrolled prisoners actual attended a family session. These ineffective programs are not helping, and in some cases are even hurting, prisoners.

Recidivism is in all geographical locations and in many time periods. Recidivism is widespread throughout the United States. In a comparison done by Virginia Department of Corrections, the lowest three-year re-incarceration rate of 23.4% in Virginia. Arizona had a rate of 39.8%. Kansas has a rate of 36.0%. Missouri has a rate of 42.7%. New York has a rate of 43.0%. The states with the three highest rates are Arkansas, Alaska, and Delaware, with a 56.5%, 63.2%, and 64.5%, respectively. (Virginia) Re-incarceration is defined as an arrest that led to a new jail or prison sentence. Some states are better at handling recidivism, but all states face it.

Recidivism is in all countries. A comparison was done by Denis Yukhnenko, a Ph.D. student at the University of Oxford, Shivpriya Sridhar, sophomore at UNC Chapel Hill majoring in Public Policy, and Seena Fazel, Professor at Oxford. It found that Norway had the lowest rate of reconviction at 20% in two years. The east and west of England had a rate of 48% in one

year. Australia was 53% in two years. Denmark was 63% in two years. (Yukhenko) According to the Bureau of Justice's most recent statistics, the United States has a reconviction rate of 55.1% in five years.(Congressional Research Service) In some countries, recidivism is called different things, for example in England it is called simply reoffending. However, all countries have to deal with the idea recidivism. All of the reconviction rates compared above were the self-reported rates of the countries. Each country listed is aware and seeking, through their own method, a solution.

The problem of recidivism is not even a new problem. As seen in the history of the penal system, there have been programs aimed at alleviating recidivism for as long as prisons were in use. There are known programs aimed at reducing recidivism in the 1580s. In 1588, the Dutch were one of first to start a major program aimed at reducing recidivism. They reduced recidivism through teaching inmates a trade and the fear of God. It was not called recidivism then, but it was still there. People did not want to kill every criminal, but they did not want them to repeat. So, they started trying to find ways to stop people from returning from crime. While the methods have changed, the struggle, at its core, has not.

Recidivism is severely damaging many citizens of the United States in several ways. Recidivism is injuring families. Associate Professor in sociology at University of California, Irvine, Kristin Turney, and Rebecca Goodsell, PhD candidate in sociology at the University of California, Irvine conducted a survey of literature. The survey was on literature involving the effects of incarcerated parents on children. They wrote that there were 2.6 million children with at least one parent who is currently incarcerated. They wrote "Compared to other children, those who experience parental incarceration suffer impairments across four domains of wellbeing:

behavior, education, health, and hardship and deprivation.” They later write that when parents are incarcerated they can not financially continue to support the child and often incarceration leads to separation, divorce, or extreme conflict between couples. They wrote that often children will express a more aggressive behavior after experiencing the incarceration of a parent. (Turney)

In a documentary by Focus on the Family called Irreplaceable, it is stated that 71% of high school dropouts, 85% of children with behavior disorders, and 85% of juveniles in prisons are from fatherless homes. (Sisarich) Within the film, Jack Cowley, National Director of Alpha USA Division of Prisons and Reentry, said that the vast majority of inmates had difficult relationships with their father. (Sisarich) When parents, particularly fathers, are incarcerated it destroys the whole family and places children at a higher risk of failure.

Recidivism is damaging to society as a whole. “Family is ...sort of the building block of civilization, of culture... you cannot have a state for very long if you don’t have the building blocks of family.” (Sisarich) This quote is by author and speaker Eric Metaxas. The damage done by recidivism to the family damages the society as a whole. For a healthy society, there must be healthy families. According to a report published in 2016 by the Congressional Research Service, there were over 2 million incarcerated people in 2014. In 2004, 1 in every 138 residents of the United States was in jail. There are on average around 600,000 prisoners released each year from federal and state prisons. According to the Bureau of Justice, 76.6% of prisoners released in 2005 were rearrested within five years. Of the prisoners released in 2005, 55.4% were convicted of a new crime. There was an average of 1,547,000 violent crimes committed each year between the years 1991 and 2010. The Bureau of Justice recorded the rearrest rate

of violent criminals at 71.3%. That equals approximately 1,103,011 violent offenders rearrested. As written above the average rate of conviction of a new crime is 55.4%. That equals an estimated 857,038 violent offenders who committed and were found guilty of a new crime. A society cannot function well for long with such a high crime rate.

Recidivism is creating more victims. If 55.4% of criminals are committing new crimes, then that creates thousands of new victims. Most crimes have at least one victim that is directly impacted. Some, for example robbery, have more than one direct victim. However, in many cases there are some witnesses. Those witnesses also have to process through the experience and are negatively affected. The victim is not the only one who is left with the pain of the offender's crime. Each case involves direct victims, witnesses, and the families and friends of both. No one person is alone in their pain.

Recidivism is causing economic problems. According to the Bureau of Prisons Annual Determination of Average Cost of Incarceration Notice, in the fiscal year 2017 the average cost for each inmate was \$36,299.25. The federal, state, and local governments are paying to house and care for these prisoners. Each year an inmate returns, the government, with citizens' money, pays around of \$36,300. This estimate does not include the money spent on attorneys, judges, and other fees. California alone spent \$298 million in fiscal year 2018–19. However, the almost \$60 million increase did nothing to lower their reconviction rates of about 50%. By having repeat offenders, recidivism is causing a drain on the government's already strained budget.

Recidivism is a serious problem. It damages every aspect of the nation and hinders nations from doing other necessary things. It has been a problem for as long as prisons existed

and will always exist. If the United States hopes to survive long-term, then it must curb this trend of recidivism.

As a nation, recidivism rates are not significantly declining. They are not declining because of a lack of co-operation, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of action. The United States system is not co-operating among itself. The states and even branches of the federal government do not have unity. One major example of this is a lack of agreed upon definition. According to a report published by the Congressional Research Service, there are many definitions and ways of measuring recidivism. One of the broad definitions is "Recidivism is defined as the rearrest, reconviction, or reincarceration of an ex-offender within a given time frame." The other main definition is the "commission of new crime".(Congressional Research Service) An even broader definition is to come back into contact with the justice system. One study done by the Bureau of Justice used rearrest as the main definition of recidivism. In a study done by the United States sentencing Commission, reconvicted was the definition. These varying definitions used for recidivism represent disunity among United States. We must define the problem unanimously before we can, together, find a solution.

Another example of a lack of co-operation is of incomparable studies. We can not compare studies because different studies use different definitions. While most state their definition of recidivism, not all clearly state it. This confusion leads to states and other administration's misunderstanding data. According to the report by the Congressional Research Service, there is a lack of rigorous literature, which leads to unclear or inconclusive analysis. They also stated that sometimes data given to the FBI is mislabeled and as such leads to untrue results.

The final example of a lack of co-operation is the partial participation. In the most current Bureau of Justice study, only 30 states participated. When finding an accurate average, all the information is imperative. Imagine if Delaware, which has the highest three-year reincarceration rate at 64.5%, did not provide evidence to the Bureau of Justice. Or if Virginia, with a three-year reincarceration rate of 23.4%, did not report. The results of the national average would be greatly skewed. Some studies use evidence directly from the FBI criminal history repository. The problem with the repositories is that there are numerous opportunities of missing or misleading information. The Congressional Research Service wrote “These repositories understate the actual recidivism levels to some unknown extent because they rely on local police agencies and courts to supply them with notifying documents.” The partial participation by police, courts, and states is harmful and is an example of the lack of co-operation. There is a lack of co-operation in the search to reducing recidivism as seen by the different definitions, incomparable studies, and the only partial participation.

The second reason recidivism is not declining is unrealistic expectations. Many researchers are looking for “the” solution. All types of programs are a step toward lower recidivism rates. The belief that there is one fix-all solution will lead to discouragement and people giving up. As the book *Education Based Incarceration and Recidivism* points out, recidivism is a complex issue. (Fitch) It involves the changing of a human’s thinking and behavior. Parents and schools spend about 18 years molding children’s minds. It takes even longer to completely remold a criminal’s. It will not be fixed by one thing. It will not be fixed overnight. According to Michael Burkhead, “We keep repeating ourselves, recycling old ideas as if they were brand new and then discarding them before we have found out if they are effective

or not, only to bring them up again later.” (Burkhead) The expectation of an easy solution is part of the reason recidivism is not declining.

The third reason that recidivism is not declining is a lack of action. There is a lack of action by the government. The Congressional Research Service cited numerous problems with the study of recidivism and the studies conducted. There have been numerous sources saying that the United States’ system needs work, but the United States is doing comparatively very little. The problem is increasing not decreasing. Changing the minimum sentencing laws, the United States has done some things but they have not directly reduced recidivism. Most states and the federal government have passed laws to lower the number of prisoners not take care of the ones we have. Most media and government do not publish information and updates about recidivism. They also are not working toward unity among their different organizations, as discussed above. There is an overwhelming lack of action against a problem that can, if ignored, destroy our nation. Recidivism is not declining. It isn’t declining because there is a lack of co-operation, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of action.

The first step to reducing recidivism is convincing people to care. Most people either do not care or do not know about recidivism. People need to care about their country. They also need to have care for others. Most people do not know about or care about recidivism. In a poll conducted in January of 2020 by Gallup, it was found that only 1% of people thought crime/violence was the most important problem facing the country. (Gallup) Wars/War/Fear of war was found to be the most important problem for 2%. (Gallup) In the United States, the fear of war was considered more important than crime. Crime involves all crime related problems not just recidivism. According to author Michael Burkhead, “It is our ambivalence on these

issues, not a lack of technical knowledge, which is the main impediment to our progress in reducing crime.” (Burkhead, p.3). Most advances or changes in policy toward reducing recidivism are never heard or seen by the average citizen. Most citizens are unaware of the battle against recidivism that is going on inside of their country. Instead, they are thinking about fear of a possible, unspecified war.

The United States government is built on the people. What the people want and care about should drive the politics. For example, all the topics presidential candidates talk about are the ones people care about. The issue of healthcare is a hot presidential topic. People care about health care. In the a study done by Gallup in March of 2018, healthcare was a major worry for citizens. “A majority of Americans have worried a great deal about healthcare each time Gallup has asked about it since 2001.” (Jones). Politicians talk about and make laws about what people care about. Representatives are supposed to represent their constituents, the people who live in their district. They represent what their constituents want. For example, states and districts with mostly rural areas are more likely to advocate and run on topics involving agriculture. The government should follow the will of the people. As William Penn, a founder of prisons in America, wrote, “Government, like clocks, go from the motion men give them; and as governments are made and moved by men, so by them they are ruined too.” (Depersis) Citizens of the United States push government in the direction they want. If the people do not push for change of the problem of recidivism, then it is unlikely it will happen.

Citizens should care about recidivism because lowering recidivism is beneficial to their country. Lowering recidivism, the United States would be, in the long run, using less money on the penal system. The money not used could go to other necessary needs. According to a study

done by the RAND cooperation, effective reentry programs could save around \$4 for every dollar spent on these programs. ( Davis) These savings would mean a better usage of the citizens tax money. Reducing Recidivism, the United States would become safer. When around 55% of every criminal released is convicted of a new crime, many crimes are committed each year by repeat offenders. There is an average of 594,600 criminals released each year. Around 55% of those criminals will commit a new crime in five years. Some criminals have been incarcerated multiple times. Reducing that statistic by 10% would lead to a safer nation.

Citizens should also care for others. Empathy and compassion are important parts of the functioning of the United States. Empathy is understanding and experiencing the emotions and thoughts of another. Compassion is knowing of another's pain and seeking to alleviate it. Compassion moves people off of their comfortable couches and into action for another person's sake. Empathy moves people out of their comfort zones and into the reality of pain, sorrow, and brokenness. Compassion and empathy are important for both the one receiving them and the one giving them. They both grow community. A necessary part of a healthy and good community is compassion and empathy.

In an article written by Emma Seppala, associate director of The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford Medical School, compassion is important to our well-being. She writes "Research shows that depression and anxiety are linked to a state of self-focus, a preoccupation with "me, myself, and I." When you do something for someone else, however, that state of self-focus shifts to a state of other-focus." (Seppala) She goes on to add that compassion increases people's emotional connection to other people.

Compassion has the potential to save lives. In 2011, Joplin, Missouri was hit by a F5 tornado. It tore through businesses, houses, churches, and a hospital. The minutes immediately after a tornado are crucial for many people's survival. In those minutes, it was not the red cross, the state government, or FEMA that were carry people to safety. It was not government agencies that were rushing people to the hospital. It was ordinary citizens. Out of compassion, ordinary citizens stepped up and reached out a helping hand. Most of those people would have rather sat down and called their family, but they instead acted because of compassion. That day people motivated by compassion and empathy saved lives.

Two area where compassion could make the greatest difference are social inclusion and employment. One factor of recidivism is antisocial behavior and a failure to integrate into society. (Wikoff) Part of the integration is the criminal, but part is other citizens. If other citizens shun the criminal and make him or her feel second class, then the integration of the criminal will be much harder. In contrast, when citizens welcome criminals into their homes and value them as humans, criminals will find integration easy and smooth. The criminals have broken the law, but that does not mean that they are forever guilty.

Another factor of recidivism that compassion can significantly decrease is employment. Sometimes it is laws that bar ex-offenders from getting jobs, but often it is employers. Most employers are not even willing to consider ex-offenders. This is another example of judging based on past problems. Many criminals are not even given the opportunity to work. When employers and other citizens have compassion on criminals, more jobs will be open to ex-offenders. A necessary part of a healthy and good community is compassion and empathy.

In order for recidivism to be reduced people need to care. By noticing and seeking to reduce recidivism, citizens are caring for their safety and the economic prosperity of their nation and they are exercising compassion and empathy.

Recidivism is often seen as a revolving door. The door keeps moving, pushing people around and around. Recidivism has been a problem for as long as prisons have been in use. Like many things, America's penal system is a melting pot of different ideas from different nations. In recent years, the United States has made rehabilitation of prisoners a priority. Despite America's attempts, the revolving door of recidivism has not been stopped or even significantly slowed. It still devastates families, creates victims, causes economic problems, and places released prisoners into a society that does not trust them and even fears them. A lack of cooperation, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of action are some of the things hindering the United States from stopping the revolving door. The most effective way to stop the door is convince more people to push. The best way to reduce recidivism is to convince people to care. It is better for the citizens if the problem is fixed. They also need to have compassion for past offenders. The problem of recidivism in the United States will only improve when people care not only about themselves but also others. The compassion of citizens is the strongest tool the United States has to slow the revolving door.

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