

“I will continue . . . speaking out against a system that is not applied equally to all”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the December 2, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts on the Arts in Bethlehem 

Kimberly Schwartz is a student studying Sociology & Anthropology at Moravian College. She is passionate about criminal justice reform, equal rights, feminism, and climate change. This piece was originally written for a course at Moravian titled Writing as Activism, taught by Dr. Joyce Hinnefeld, in which students are encouraged to consider topics such as mass incarceration, migration, and how to change the world through writing.

What I Know, Right Now, About Incarceration in The United States:

A History of Learning Through Experiences and Exposure

part 10

An article published by The Marshall Project in July of this year includes data on different states' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its potentially catastrophic effect on the country's incarcerated population. The article notes that the prison population has dropped 8% since the beginning of the pandemic, but that this seems to be a result of prisons refusing transfers from local jails, parole officers refraining from sending parolees to jail for violations, and court closures, not because of policies put into effect in order to release the most vulnerable members of the country's incarcerated population such as the sick and elderly (Sharma, Li, Lavoie, & Lauer, 2020).

I am now 25 years old and have known and loved countless people involved in the legal system. I have witnessed discrimination and injustices committed against friends and acquaintances in the name of the law. I have learned that incarceration is often used to punish people simply for being poor, black, or mentally ill. I have seen that this continues even in the midst of a global pandemic, when citizens are being encouraged to wear masks and stand 6 feet apart while incarcerated people are unable to do the same. I believe society can do better. I believe that mental illness, addiction, homelessness, and poverty should not be indicators that an individual deserves to have his or her freedom taken away. I will continue to learn and teach others about alternatives to the United States' current criminal justice system, such as the prison abolition movement, while speaking out against a system that is not applied equally to all.

tenth and final part in a series

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