

#2a1

This essay, "Fear + Prisons," is my submission to prisonerexpress.org for its October 2016 word theme, ~~Prison~~ "Facing Fear."

It's scientifically sound + concerns an issues that prisoncrats ignore - they'd run into problems if they accept that their degradation/torture damages us + that prior abuse/neglect made us criminals.

#### "Fear and Prisons" by Nate A. Lindell

Some people are more fearless than others. This can be caused by a responsiveness gene<sup>1</sup> known as the warrior gene which shapes and influences how our brains function so that, amongst other things, a person doesn't scare easily.

Ironically, both prisoners and prison guards, as well as police, politicians, soldiers, and CEOs,<sup>2</sup> are far more likely to possess the warrior gene than the general public. Having the gene doesn't guarantee that a person will develop the nastier traits that can manifest in a mind created by a brain that's shaped by this gene. Usually it takes negative environmental factors (NEFs) to incite the development of nasty traits (e.g. living with an abusive parent or in a violent neighborhood).<sup>3</sup> Those NEFs can train a vulnerable mind in harmful ways: to not fear repercussions for breaking laws or hurting people, to not fear the dangers of drug or alcohol abuse, etc. Those NEFs can create future NEFs.<sup>3</sup>

Both prisoners and prison guards are more likely to have this potential for a socially toxic fearlessness.<sup>3</sup> But that does not mean that prisoners and guards are fated to be psychopaths. The warrior gene is also called the psychopath gene.

Yet prisons are typically psychopath grad schools where both prisoners and guards refine their lack of fear as well as their lack of empathy for suffering and degradation of those around them. Prison administrators (prisoncrats) typically conspire to inflict as much misery and degradation on prisoners as they can get away with, typically resulting in a prisoner's mind being destroyed or their personality growing ugly.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Evil in, evil out.

For the many out there who believe otherwise--it must be many, because this is a democracy and voters haven't dethroned the prisoncrats causing prisons' systemic degradation--please explain

why we so often hear of soldiers returning from the acute NEF or war with dangerous mental problems but have never heard of a soldier returning from war with improved mental health? This belief that you can torment people and they they are still to blame for any negative reaction to that torment is based on the delusion that people have a miraculously, entirely free will.<sup>6</sup> This belief often results in people who've been tormented from birth--such is the case for many prisoners--and responded negatively to that torment.<sup>7</sup> Then they are further tormented by the prison system for that negative response, ad infinitum.

For society to knowingly permit the persistence of this sadistic cycle of degradation, society must be scared of something or hate something--same thing. What society fears or hates must have something to do with what might occur if society ran humane prisons in which those wanting to be restored to society have that opportunity--and even those who persist in their criminal ways are restricted from doing so. Or a prison where no one is incarcerated as punishment or held in punitive conditions.

A treaty ratified by the U.S. requires as much: "All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person" (Article 10 of the U.N.'s International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). The U.S. is a leading member of the U.N., yet awesomely ignores Rule 57 of the U.N.'s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners: "Imprisonment and other measures which result in cutting off an offender from the outside world are afflictive... Therefore, the prison system shall not...aggravate the suffering inherent in such a situation."

There are many theories as to what some of the fears are that motivate people to at least ignore the nature of the prisons their elected government has created. Whether or not those theories are correct, nothing will change until people let go of their fears.

1. A responsiveness gene is a gene that "responds" to environmental factors, unlike for example, the genes that determine our eye color. The gene changes its resulting "product."
2. A prison psychologist told me this, but it's also revealed in texts like *The Mask of Sanity* and *The Psychopath Inside*.
3. As revealed in *Parental Incarceration* (Routledge 2016), adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), what I've called NEFs, harm a child's development. Most prisoners have experienced numerous ACEs. However, developmental resources and support (e.g. a grandmother's love) can cancel out the impact of ACEs.
4. The most frequent excuse prison staff give for punishing prisoners is that it's needed for security reason.
5. In describing the effects of solitary confinement, it's known that, "A considerable number of the prisoners fell, after even a short confinement, into a semi-fatuous condition from which it was next to impossible to arouse them, and others became violently insane." In re M  
134 U.S. 160, 168 (1890).

## WORD AND PICTURE THEMES

6. See "Do We Really Have a Choice?" posted on my blog *Prometheus Writes!* in October 2011. The article explains how free our will is and isn't: [betweenthebars.org/blogs/540/](http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/540/)
7. See *Parental Incarceration*.
8. With all the documentaries, news reports, books, and web articles exposing the nature of U.S. prisons, society cannot plead ignorant.

← This is the last part of the essay.

Camille,  
Please repost this on my face book.  
Merci!  
I want more of my science essays on it, to broaden its appeal.

### ~~"I can Has a Name" by D. Spencer~~

~~The slight woman sat in the witness stand in the crowded courtroom. Her hands trembled in her lap as her head bowed low. She was sure that he could hear her heart pounding in her chest. She knew with absolute certainty that he could see fear pouring out of her like water from a broken vessel. Her thoughts were a storm that was quickly spinning out of control. The young woman raised her eyes to look out at the people before her, faces chosen. Some full of compassion. Others holding hatred and anger. Still others just seeking their fill of seeing someone else's drama played out before them. Her eyes fell upon her loving Mother, protectively flanked on both sides by her equally loving Aunt and Uncle. She took a moment to comprehend that her older brothers were not there and were protected from the haunting, unforgettable testimony that was about to spill from the woman in the witness box. Her Mother knew best: her brothers couldn't have consumed the events she would recall without something horrible happening in the courtroom. Her mother caressed her face and tried to convey, "Be strong... Tell the truth... You are not alone."~~

~~The fearful woman's eyes drifted toward the left where there were faces full of hostility, reaching out to condemn, blame, accuse her of being the perpetrator of some horrific crime. Desperate to not believe, desperate to continue along the path they had chosen early on and stand in support of the defendant "no matter what." Eyes that she would have to see again and again when she was returned to the prison shackles. Even then, she somehow understood that they didn't have a clue as to what they were doing.~~

~~Quicker than words can explain or describe, her mind is back there "back in a prison cell, tied to a bed, gagged." She is absolutely positive that she is going to die. There is no way that a human being could feel this degree of pain and survive. No way. She knows she is bleeding but not from where or why, but she smells it all the same. If helpfully it would be much longer until she passes into consciousness. The bleeding and swelling on and in her brain became a merciful fool, helping her to escape the nightmare. Her heartbeat from then is just as it is now. Her eyes look in the frightening face above her, no longer her brother, no longer a man she once trusted and truly cared about. An indescribable beast summoned from the pits of hell by jealousy and rejection.~~

~~When will the pain stop? How will she survive this night? Why isn't anyone helping her? Her eyes, her mind, slamming back to the present moment. A deep breath... Remember what the psychiatrist said: "It's really not happening. It's a reel. Like a movie. You can shut it off." Escher said man done. Her eyes blink several~~

~~ment, she k~~  
~~She can identify fear and give him his proper name.~~

~~"Yes, sir. I see the man who raped and beat me in this courtroom. He's right there." With a sigh of relief, I lower my hand, realizing that although I just faced fear, I must now begin the journey of facing the demon that keeps me reliving that day over and over again.~~

### ~~by Jonathan McGeech~~

~~Fear is a feeling that can paralyze, a feeling that can overwhelm. We can become frozen or we can overreact. Fear can involve the unknown or even worse, the known. To stay calm in the face of fear, to accept that fear is natural and then to harness it to get through the situation as well as possible. This is what I strive to do. We all have a greatest fear and one that stands out. But to me, it is the everyday fears and how we react that make us a better person or a worse person. To me, the ability to step up and accept the challenge that is posed by our everyday fears will help us grow and mature. We can all run away. We can all freeze up, but very few of us can consistently face fear in the eyes and making whatever it is that we fear back down. Do I do this every time? No. Do I try? Sometimes. Do I have room to improve? Of course. Let's see what I can do.~~

### ~~"Nothing but Fear" by Daniel Matthews~~

~~Ya know, it's really crazy. All my fears, all my worldly uncertainties that I had as an adolescent, have gone away ever since I got locked up. All the real, and the imagined, things followed me around every waking moment.~~

~~It's really strange. I got locked up at 18, when Independence first balances on experiences. I was a naturally overly~~