

Locked up for what you might do: the Good Lives Model perverted

written by Sandy | May 31, 2018



By Michael M. . . . Imagine what it would be like to be [Jason Schoenfeld, a disabled military veteran](#) who was convicted of aggravated assault of a child, sent to prison for 18 years, and then released at the end of his term to a halfway house in Houston, Texas. At the halfway house, he stayed in relatively comfortable quarters and was allowed to come and go freely while he looked for work and a permanent place to live. That lasted until he was unceremoniously and without warning hustled into a corrections van and transported 570 miles away to the Texas Civil Commitment Center (TCCC) in Littlefield, Texas. The facility was opened in 2015 on the site of an old state prison in the remote Texas panhandle town with a population 6,372. It currently houses 382 prisoners, or, as the staff prefers to call them, “residents.”

Once Schoenfeld recovered from the shock of his sudden re-incarceration, he took stock of his new surroundings.

Fifteen-foot razor wire-topped fences surround the facility. His white, cinder-block, two-man cell was furnished with a stainless-steel jailhouse toilet/sink combo, an angle-iron bunk bed with a depressingly thin mattress, and a metal stool permanently bolted to the concrete floor.

He was told by staffers that they were not to refer to themselves as prisoners; they were “residents.” And this wasn’t a prison, it was a “treatment facility.” And as for when they might ever be allowed to leave, the answer was less clear. In the two and a half years since TCCC opened for business, only five “residents” have been released, yet just one made it all the way back into the community of free citizens. The other four were released to medical facilities, where they subsequently died.

If you’re thinking that this sounds eerily like the plot of Steven Spielberg’s [Minority Report](#), the 2002 movie about a future where people are arrested **not** for the crimes they’ve committed but for the crimes they **might** commit in the future, you’re right. In the movie, prisoners are fitted with brain devices that put them permanently into a dreamlike sleep for the rest of their lives. As the offender sinks into unconsciousness, the warden tells him that all of his dreams will come true.

The TCCC residents’ handbook claims, “The goal of our program is to prepare residents for the safe return to the community.” It goes on to say, “Services provided at the TCCC are based on empirical studies that support a comprehensive approach to sex offender treatment, known in the literature as [“The Good Lives Model.”](#)

According to the developer of this model, individuals with a history of offending are goal-directed and need certain “primary human goods,” similar to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. These “primary goods” are certain states of mind, personal characteristics, and experiences that are intrinsically

beneficial and sought for their own sake and represent an individual's core values and life priorities. They are: (1) life (2) knowledge (3) excellence in play (4) excellence in work (5) excellence in agency (i.e., autonomy and self-direction) (6) inner peace (i.e., freedom from emotional turmoil and stress) (7) friendship (including intimate, romantic, and family relationships) (8) community (9) spirituality (10) happiness and (11) creativity.

This all sounds wonderfully warm and fuzzy until one is forced to contemplate just how in the world **any** of these basic needs can be met while a person is incarcerated for what he **might do**, cut off from his family and friends, and given little to no hope for release, ever. That is the stark reality of their "Good Lives Model," which is like the **Minority Report** warden telling doomed inmates that all their dreams are about to come true.

Gary Cardenas, a 40-year-old sex offender at TCCC, doesn't believe the hype. In an exclusive [interview with A-J Media](#), he said, "This facility is, in fact, a prison and it is operated with excessive security. I am a free man not on parole or probation and yet I am held in a maximum-security prison."

Andre Johnson was a teenager in 1991 when he was imprisoned for five aggravated sexual assaults on female victims that he committed when he was 15 and 16 years old. [In a 2016 letter provided to A-J Media](#), Johnson wrote, "I am locked away again, not for reoffending, but solely on a prediction; a prediction...that indicate[s] I'm capable of doing it again."

There are over 51,000 sex offenders currently in civil commitment facilities nationwide, and all but a handful of them are men. Twenty states currently have civil commitment programs for sex offenders. Additional states are considering such programs, while others, such as Minnesota (which has never released a single person from its program), are having to retool theirs due to constitutional challenges.

One doesn't have to be a constitutional scholar to know that locking people up indefinitely for crimes they *may* commit in the future or holding them long after their sentences have expired is wrong.

The question is what are we going to do about it?

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