

THE PRISON MINISTRY
BRIDGE STREET A. W. M.E. CHURCH
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Rev. David B. Cousin, Sr., Pastor
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GOOD MORNING!

My name is Rev. Diane Hodges. I am the Director of Prison Ministry at Bridge Street African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church, located in Bedford-Stuyvesant Area in Brooklyn, New York.

Bedford-Stuyvesant is one of the seven areas where people are are caught with drugs in their possession.

Many of the people who are arrested are folks with drug problems. They make their living selling drugs, because they have not finished High School. Many can not read or write. They drop out of school because they loose interest and because they can make money selling drugs.

Jail and Prison is not the answer. We are just warehousing people costing the Taxpayers millions of dollars.

The Rockefeller Drug Laws are unjust for the past 35 years. They have jailed about 13,000 drug offenders. About 70-80percent of these persons have never been convicted of a violent felony.

If the Judges are allow to hear each case and not be control by the Rockefeller Drug Laws things would work out better, for example a young sister whose only crime was getting into a car and going to a party.

She took a break from studying, and got into a car, which was overloaded with young adults. The Police stop them. She was sitting on the lap of a young man, who put his drugs in her pocket. She was later convicted on the Rockefeller Drug Law and has spent many years of her young life in Abion Correctional Center.

If this case had been left in the hands of the Judge things may have gone different. She was a good student with good grades. She was never in trouble, came from a good family and was active in her church. The only things she did wrong was take a break from studying and went to a party.

I have spent much of my time working with people who are in Prison, coming home and working with families and children of Inmates.

Since about 1982 NYC has opened 38 Prisons. They are all Upstate , New York . They are in places that are represented by Republicans. The Prison provide most of the employment for the Town people. They receive billions of dollars because Inmates Upstate are counted in the Census, meaning funds that should go to the places where these Inmates come from. Funds don't they go where the Inmates are housed, cheating poor Communities out of Funding.

The Rockefeller Drug Laws fills the Prisons. It's costly. There are many alternatives to Prison. Drug addiction is a sickness. We don't put people with drinking problems in Prison, we send them to treatment.

Out Patient Drug Treatment Programs work. So does Residential Drug Programs and they both cost less than Prison. I have seen the results. I have two persons who have become Ministers and two who have received their B.A.Degree. Many have gotten their GED and are now working.

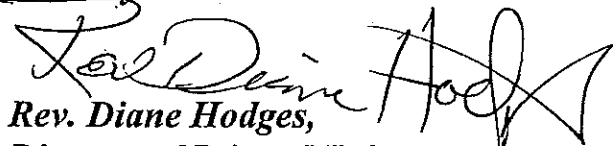
Remember the Rockefeller Drug Laws fuel Racism. Ninety Percent of the Drug Offenders in New York Prisons are African Americans and Latinoes.

They have never caused many Kingpins to be arrested. Most arrest and low level drug sellers are users. Prison is very costly.

We must restore Sentencing in the hands of the Trial Judges. We must improve Education and Job Training. We must find ways to prevent High School Dropouts.

We must provide more Funding for Alternatives to Prison. The Rockefeller Drug Laws are wrong. It's up to us to end the 35 years of injustice.

Thank you.


Rev. Diane Hodges,
Director of Prison Ministry