



Life In Prison: Eight Hours at a Time

Robert Reilly

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Silver Medal, 2015 IBPA Benjamin Franklin Awards, Best New Voice

Finalist, Memoir, 2015 Maine Literary Award

In this gripping nonfiction account, Robert Reilly provides a look inside America's prison system unlike any other, and the way that it affects not only the prisoners themselves but also the corrections officers and their families.

After 13 years of struggling in the music business, Robert Reilly found himself broke and on the edge of despair. The specter of success in the music business had become a monster about to ruin his family life. Something had to change, or something was going to break beyond repair.

A chance conversation with a neighbor led him to apply, somewhat half-heartedly, for a job at the county prison. Although he hated the thought of a "real job," a regular salary of \$40,000 with benefits, and paid time off seemed like a small fortune. "Amazingly, I somehow got hired. So, in an effort to do the right thing and put my family first, I left the madness of the music business and entered the insanity of the U.S. prison system."

Robert Reilly served a seven-year term as a prison guard in Pennsylvania and Maine. Entering America's industrial prison system in search of a way to support his young family, the struggling musician found himself in a looking-glass world where, often, only the uniforms distinguished guards from prisoners. *Life in Prison* chronicles the horrors of a place where justice is arbitrary, outcomes are preordained, and the private sector makes big money while the public looks away. This is Reilly's story of doing time.

To call the experience sobering would be the ultimate understatement: "As time crawls by, I become jealous of the inmates leaving the prison. I start to slip; I start to feel like I'm losing my faith. Any trace of innocence that I thought I still had starts to evaporate. I begin to feel trapped, imprisoned, locked in a dark heartbreaking world, just like an inmate."

Life In Prison: Eight Hours at a Time Details

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From Reader Review Life In Prison: Eight Hours at a Time for online ebook

Kym says

The book was very well written and not sugar coated.

Aaron Kleinheksel says

I may add more to this review at a later date...

I gave this book 4 stars not because it is written particularly well, but more because it gets so much right. Reading Rob Reilly's thoughts was disturbingly like reading my own. American Corrections is the same, whether in Pennsylvania, Maine, or Michigan. What makes this book unique is the perspective from which it is written. Most books detailing corrections in America are written from academic, administrative, and/or political positions far removed from the blood, dirt, stench, sweat, and insanity of the cell blocks and units.

This book is mostly a collection of anecdotes, musings, and autobiographical sketches covering the 6 or so years the author spent as a corrections officer in Pennsylvania, and then Maine. He obviously (and admittedly) kept a personal journal, which provided the material for the book. I've often regretted not doing the same over the years, just to be able to remember facts more accurately. I think every CO w/ any time under their duty belt would be able to fill a book of this size or larger w/ similar tales.

Thankfully at my location I've not had to endure quite the depths of hopelessness Reilly did in Maine prior to his finding a new line of work, but many of the same organisational weaknesses exist, to a greater or lesser degree.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who works or has ever worked the line in corrections, or who is thinking of getting into the career field, or who is just plain interested in peering through a small window to "life on the inside." I would suggest it as necessary reading to those who are in any supervisory or administrative position in corrections, but I won't hold my breath.

Nelson says

Wow

Eye opening, correct in all aspects and painted with a broad but heavy brush stroke that, more or less, accurately describes the vicious cycle of day to day life on the inside, from the "outside."

Tricia Sanders says

interesting book as told from a prison guards point of view from working in the corrections system for many years.

Toni says

I really enjoyed this book which is unlike anything I've ever read. It was really well written and I was riveted every step of the way. It was a real, unapologetic look at what the American prison system is like for a prison guard and it wasn't pretty. I would recommend this book to anyone - even if you don't think you would like a non-fiction novel.

Cyndi says

Another Perspective

As a person who has worked with several facets of the criminal justice system, I always look for different perspectives on the system. The title caught my eye as I never really thought of the corrections job in that manner. This book takes a hard look at prison from a corrections officer perspective and raises some thought provoking questions.

Roberta says

From the guards point of view

As a watcher of Locked Up on TV, this book tells about prison life from the guard's side. Maybe we need a TV show depicting the other side. A real eye opener about the state of our prisons. A good read from a guard that really seemed to care about the prisoners.

Jool says

This is an amazing book that describes life as a corrections officer. The good, the bad and the ugly. The author did a great job describing the different prisons, different inmates (using aliases) and the things he saw and experienced for many years on the job. Some funny, some sad, some scary or horrifying. Plus the author includes some pretty sad statistics about "prison companies" who run prisons as profitable corporations and it is NOT in their best interest to rehab the prisoners. This is all backed by websites, research sources, etc. I had heard and read about much of this: the #of prisoners per capita in the US, stuff like that.. But this just puts it all in perspective. No wonder the good officers leave the system after just a few years - what a depressing and grueling environment. Some prisons being better than others.

I really recommend this book.

John Rusch says

Read This Book

I have given this book five stars because it is well written and holds your attention, I personally find the subject of prison life and how the system is run intresting.

John E. Donovan says

An eye-opener!

Author Robert Reilly gives anyone reading his book, a first-hand look at prison-life, both from the point of view as a warden, and to a lesser degree, from the point of view as a prisoner ... and he tells it like it is, sugar-coating nothing, whether one wishes to hear about the problems facing both prisoners and the prison system, alike, or not! A real eye-opener to the short-comings of what prisons do provide (as opposed to what they could provide) and an even greater eye-opener as to the costs (both in monetary and in human terms) that we incur as a nation to run this far-from-ideal prison system. Good for Reilly for having the guts to expose us all to the 'brokenness' of the prison system in the U.S. (at the time of this expose, anyway) and let us hope that there are people out there that know of these failings and, more, who act to repair this brokenness . Perhaps Reilly's book will provide the impetus (or may have already provided the impetus) for positive change in the U.S. prison system ... one can hope, anyway.

Gail says

Very well done book. I enjoyed the authors voice and his perspective. I feel that I have read a fair number of books on prisons or books told from an inmates point of view but I think this was the first time I have read one from a CO's POV.

He has an interesting view being as he is an immigrant from England and also his musical background.

Marie says

I found this story very well told. It begins in a very dramatic fashion and makes you want to know more. It has moments of both heartbreak and humor and the voice of the author lets you hear the frustration with the system as he experienced it. Having once worked as a corrections officer myself (albeit on a smaller scale at a local jail) I found it very true to life. Leadership, both good and bad, can really make a difference in that kind of setting. As can dealing with challenging co-workers. It never fails that in jobs where people have power over others, that some abuse that power. And now that I run a program with inmates at MSP, one of the prisons mentioned, I have seen some of the other things he had to deal with as well. Thankfully my program has a much more positive vibe connected to it. (K-9 Corrections, where inmates train dogs for the local shelter.) I think this is a must read for anyone considering working in the corrections field. It is a very eye opening look at the prison system as a whole, as well as the mental health aspect of the system. It is also a haunting look at human nature and some of the bad things we don't want to think about. I highly recommend this book for anyone that is interested in the reality of our complicated, and not always effective nor fair, justice system.

Jennifer says

I just finished this book last night. . .I wrote my first review for Amazon today, never have done that before. This book hit so close to home but yet was so enlightening to me. Many books have been written from the prisoner's point of view. This is the first book I've read written from the correction officer's point of view. It's not so pretty.

My husband was a corrections officer in a county jail, granted, not as big as what Mr. Reilly was dealing with, but yet some of the same situations. My husband would talk about situations at the jail and I thought I was relating but he would always so, no, you just don't quite understand where I'm coming from. I thought he was wrong. After reading this book, he was so right. I had no clue the day to day issues he was really dealing with regarding inmates.

Mr. Reilly and the way he treated inmates made me hope that was the way my husband did, you treat them with respect, they will respect you right back. But the working conditions are deplorable, the hours of mandated overtime become an issue, and administration is oblivious to it all because as long as they have that bottom line covered, it's not on them.

I was very thankful to read at the end that Mr. Reilly was able to get out of that job. . . .my husband wasn't able to leave as much as work as he would have liked and it weighed heavy on his mind, along with the double shift work and other issues. . . .

Joe says

Totally enjoyed this book! I felt like I was right there with him throughout the whole story. An excellent writer! I would certainly reread. I'm going to check to see if he has written anything else and would like to read it.

Diane Yannick says

Another prison book to help me flesh out my understanding of our prison system. This one was written by Robert Reilly an English immigrant who had to give up a floundering music career to provide for his growing family. He became a prison guard for 7 years in both PA and Maine, his first "real job".

He did a great job of taking the reader inside the prison and giving us an unvarnished look at the inmates, the other guards, and the environment.

When Robert entered the system, he was a respectful man who believed in the dignity of all of his fellow human beings. He had a sense of humor and a strong work ethic. Seven years later, he was disillusioned and on the brink of a breakdown. He quit and found a job as a boat builder. He left behind many corrupt, unstable guards who abused their power on a daily basis. "The people who run the prisons often committed much greater crimes than the men and women who were incarcerated."

I had no idea that for profit prisons have become such big multi-millionaire businesses. It is financially advantageous to keep building more prisons and jamming up the ones we have. We house one fourth of the incarcerated people in the world. In PA, we spend an average of \$50,000 a year per inmate and \$15,000 a year per student. Something is very much wrong with that picture.

The mentally ill make up about a third of the population. Prisons have unfortunately become the "default caregiver" for the severely mentally ill.

The stories he told about these inmates were especially sad.

Once again I am convinced that solitary confinement is counterproductive.

The amount and variety of meds that are given to subdue inmates is mind-blowing. The amount of time they are in their cells in The PA prison seems inhumane. The severity of their punishment seems to have more to do with their financial options than their actual crime.

There are an abundance of supervisors while guards are asked to keep tabs on 96 inmates. The amount of mandatory overtime that the guards had to work was astounding. Sick calls made it extremely tough for the guards to have any sort of home life. (Heaven forbid that a supervisor be reassigned.) Robert once had to work 24 hours straight. He often had to work double shifts.

In Maine, they had more programs for the inmates. This looked good on paper. but the reality of it was that they didn't have enough guards to safely implement the programs.

The recidivism rate averages 60% in US prisons. This tells me that we need to do better. My next book will be written by a prisoner but I need a break. I'm having too many nightmares about prison right now.
