



Asphalt Justice: A Critique of the Criminal Justice System in America (Praeger Series in Criminology & Crime Control Policy)

John R. Cook

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The current emphasis on get tough approaches to crime has had and will continue to have a disastrous impact on society as a whole. Cook, who has worked extensively in various capacities throughout the criminal justice system, argues that the failure to encourage treatment and rehabilitation is extremely shortsighted and serves only to postpone societal ills. He examines the prison experience as a psychological experience and suggests that restructuring the prison environment to focus on changing the behavior of criminals will ultimately be more cost effective and more beneficial to society. Approaching the problem of crime in a coordinated and systematic way will produce more results than the current reliance on political posturing and media sound bites.

Recent formulation of crime policy often seems driven by statistically rare and exceptional events, and the new laws passed in response to sensational events have actually resulted in an ever-growing and increasingly violent criminal underclass. Similarly, the trend toward incarceration and extreme punishment as the primary means of correction has led to unfortunate consequences. Overcrowding, massive prison construction, and the siphoning of funds from the rest of the public sector are all get tough byproducts. This study proposes solutions to current systemic problems aimed at those interested in trying to develop plans or treatment strategies within correctional settings.

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