

MIDDLE GROUND PRISON REFORM

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**Mr. Charles Ryan
Director
Arizona Department of Corrections
1601 West Jefferson
Phoenix, Arizona 85007**

Dear Mr. Ryan:

I attended the House of Representatives hearing of the Military Affairs and Public Safety Committee this morning and watched the slide show which the ADOC presented to the committee.

The slide show consisted of various charts, graphs, bullet point information and large color photos depicting various scenes from Department of Corrections facilities. One photo in particular, listed as Number 37, is of particular concern.

The photo shows a very close-up image of an inmate whose face and body is heavily-tattooed, who is lying in a face down prone position on some sort of a gurney with his hands visibly cuffed behind his back. He is sneering at the camera. His tattoos seem to have a spider-web pattern, and they cover his face, head and arms.

Your comments which accompanied this photo when it came up on the viewing screen included that he was "probably our worst" inmate; that he had attempted to kill a prison guard,¹ etc.

There is no question that there are, in fact, menacing-appearing inmates who are housed in the Department's prison facilities. But you are well aware that these are not at all representative of the prison population as a whole. Using just one single image in such an "in-your-face, this-is-what-we-deal-with-all-day" manner is simply unprofessional and goes against all claims the Department makes that prisoners are treated with dignity and professionalism.

Mr. Ryan, the slide show segues inartfully from photos of various buildings and the

¹ Perhaps a photo of Leroy Cropper #091423 would have been a better choice; he did, in fact, kill a prison guard, Brent Lumley, who – in direct violation of post orders and policy – left the door to the control room he was sitting in unlocked. However, Cropper has no visible tattoos on his face, nor does he look particularly menacing.

interiors of various types of cells to just this one "bogey man" for no reason other than the obvious – to conjure up shocking and disturbing notions in the heads of anyone viewing the show about what they should expect to "see" in their mind's eye when thinking about prisoners; hence, when thinking about prison policy and regulations.

It seems to me that two things are obvious. One, the Department's "dog and pony show" is designed to make an overt -- even pathetic -- attempt to portray the inmate population as "bogey men" who are all very dangerous, very fearful, and who fit into a stereotyped image of a sub-human species who should never walk free on the earth again. In the context of this photo's appearance in your slide show, this photo is a gratuitous use of an image that is calculated to strike both fear and loathing in the eyes of legislators who fund your Department's continuing requests for beds, staff and high-tech equipment.

Second, in using this inmate, the Department misses an important opportunity to demonstrate through visual images that the vast majority of the almost 16,000 prisoners who WILL be released to the community each year are very much just like all the rest of us – they are someone's father, husband, brother, son (mother, daughter, etc.) and their full and successful reintegration into the community is vital to long-term public safety, which the Department professes to support.

This slide – on its own – is akin to the disgusting use by Sheriff Joe Arpaio – of "mug shots of the week" on his website, which often show clearly mentally disturbed people who have been arrested after altercations with police.

Does this inmate know that his image is being published by the Arizona Department of Corrections as the "face" of the prisoner population in your slide show presentation? It would seem to me that he would have to give permission for his image to be used in this fashion. Does he have mental problems? If so, why would you mock a mentally ill person by using his image to frighten people?

I really expect more of you and more of the Department. Please remove this image from your slide show presentation.

Sincerely,

**Donna Leone Hamm
Director**