

**VALIDITY OF PRISON IN THE CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRACIES CONTEXT:
A critical analysis based on the experience of reforms in Venezuela**

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Summary of the conference

In the democratic societies the discourses on the reason of a penitentiary system alternate in two directions: the rehabilitation and the neutralization of “dangerous” individuals as dissuasive measures to decrease criminality. Nevertheless, in practice both aspects result unsustainable in the light of the empiric evidences. Prison seems to persist because societies and the culture of the penal systems do not conceive satisfactory alternatives for their each time more punitive traditions; in response to the external pressure, reform actions are being executed that do not resolve the situation.

With the experience of the penitentiary reform in Venezuela since 2004 in mind, and which is still ongoing, a critical analysis of the validity of prison and the outreach of the re-founding process of the penitentiary systems will be realized, the tendency seems to be to consider a good prison as one that tends to guarantee security, order, discipline, controls, and the acts and movements of the persons deprived of freedom. Meaning that it remains a segregating institution that, far from re-educating, promotes imprisonment¹ as a form to adapt to the surroundings and disintegrate themselves in its personality.

Prison continues to be a corporal punishment, of public embarrassment and death for many deprived of freedom, and needs to implement strategies that promote human dignity as part of public guarantor policies as a step previous to their disappearance.

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¹Proceso de internalización de normas, valores y conductas propios del entorno carcelario. Ver Clemmer, D. (1940). *La comunidad prisión*. Boston: pg 82