

Dear Reader,

For nearly a decade, the country has been intensely debating its criminal justice system. Policing and courts are the most public parts of the system, but prisons are the largest: nearly two million Americans are incarcerated. What goes on there?

Bill Keller is one of America's most respected and accomplished journalists: a Pulitzer Prize-winning foreign correspondent, former executive editor of the *New York Times*, and founding editor of the Marshall Project, a nonprofit news organization that covers criminal justice. In *What's Prison For?*, his first book, Keller argues that prisons don't have to be grim, punitive institutions. Instead, they can help incarcerated people find their way to a better life on the outside.

*What's Prison For?* is a clear-eyed, indispensable guide to the raging national debate about criminal justice, and also a global tour of techniques for operating prisons. It may surprise you in its optimism. Having spent years deeply immersed in his subject, Keller has emerged as a believer in the potential of prisons to educate and rehabilitate. He shows us prisons that treat incarcerated people with respect and dignity, and challenges us to overcome whatever prejudices we may have about people in prison being irredeemable. It's possible, Keller shows us, to have a prison system that isn't a source of national shame and that doesn't leave everyone involved in it worse off.

Best,



Nicholas Lemann