

Open Letter to the Community

By [Guest Writer](#) • Aug 16, 2020

• Topics: [Whatcom County](#),
[Law & Justice](#)

Irene Morgan guest writes today. She was raised on a farm in Whatcom County, and raised her own family on a farm in our county.



Irene then turned to helping others break free of our dysfunctional justice system, founding the Restorative Community Coalition in 2006. She turns 80 this week.

As many of you may know, I founded the [Restorative CommUnity Coalition](#) in 2006 and have been an advocate for the voiceless and underserved for the majority of my life.

This letter is written as a birthday gift to myself. I have a lot on my 80-year-old chest that needs to be delivered to the rightful owners, i.e., 'The Operations' within our 'system.' I am referring to: our politicians, government, especially the courts (the injustice system), the police (bringers of bodies/people to the injustice system), and the workers within all these categories (the slaves of 'the system').

There are only a very few who know or see this entire picture and know the roles that are played in this game. I've known for a very long time that there is 'something' wrong with how our society works. While nosing in and around the community, working and volunteering in non-profits for over three decades, I've gathered bits and pieces – building a picture of the nonsensical puzzle.

As a small child my family moved to a small farm in rural Whatcom County where I have lived for 75 years, so I have a very unique view, experience, and perspective of the history and, now, current events of this community.

I've sat in MANY meetings, presentations, and mappings, hearing and learning about the 'continuum of care' with the programs offered by the system. 'The Operations' of the system are VERY proud of the lists and the services they provide our citizens in need.

What 'The Operations' don't tell us is that they are mostly token programs that serve a VERY few, and no, most people DO NOT have a 'continuum of care.' The barriers and cracks in the system that most experience keep them in a state of dysfunction and chaos, which from my experience is deliberate and contrived. WHY? To keep 'the system' intact because the system 'works for the system' – NOT the people going through the system.

While working with people with conviction histories, I've experienced myriad situations that defy common sense within 'the system.' A friend I've had for 10 years, with a mental health history, called me for help; he'd been arrested again. Long story short – I shared his experience of being dropped through crack after crack after crack! AND no one took responsibility for his or her failures. If I hadn't been involved, 'the system' would have taken over and he would be back in jail – rotting – because 'the system works – for the system.' The most ridiculous thing is – it's all fixable! It can be fixed with common sense: Fill the gaps! Take responsibility. Be accountable. Possibly the biggest hurdle is a change in attitude from the 'Operations Department' and the service providers.

There are many who look with disdain on our citizens who have conviction histories– using names like, bimbos, losers, frequent fliers, and worse. I've followed and helped dozens of these folks as a Court Navigator (a program I developed when I saw its value) and none of them would have been successful without our help. The trauma that comes from an arrest, the probable loss of a job, the fees and fines that rack up, are devastating. The chaos within the courts: public defenders, probation, myriad program appointments, treatment, etc. is almost impossible to navigate without support. The shame and depression that is experienced is debilitating. The relief and hope that comes from community support is truly awesome to experience.

Since the inception of Restorative CommUnity Coalition, I have been considered an intruder on the scene of the jail expansion efforts. I have been disrespected, shut down, uninvited, rejected, disallowed, and silenced by the powers that be. I have even been accused of taking a wrecking ball to a 20-year long jail growth project, for which I am VERY proud. I am devoted to being a voice for this insane 20th Century plan to cripple our county financially. Jails are closing down and there are hundreds, if not thousands, of empty jail beds in our state. The population in our jail needs to be reduced, yes, even more! Do your homework.

Our punitive "justice" system is archaic and demeaning and very lucrative. My goal is to educate and advocate for more 'Defund Police' funds to be used to expand these token programs into offering more support of this population so they can be the functional citizens we expect them to be AND they WANT to be! My vision for the ReStoreALife Center is one of the stopgaps needed. We have a long list of helpful programs and business plans for housing, employment, parenting, living skills, treatment, Restorative Justice circles, conflict resolution, emotional resilience and wellness training that can and should be implemented to solve these issues.

We, as citizens of Whatcom County, have an opportunity to raise our voices in support of this segment of our population. If more of them don't have the chance to succeed – we ALL

suffer – with more taxes (if that's possible), less public safety, more crime, continued useless arrests, and failures of our courts. It creates an economic ball and chain that debilitates our seniors, middle class, and all segments of our community. Our current practices are NOT RIGHT.

If this gives you pause – or if it gives you hope – please contact us and see how you can join the masses knowing that your one-degree of change WILL make a difference.

Wishing you all Blessings and good health in ALL ways,

Irene Lincoln Morgan

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Founder, **Restorative Community Coalition**

TheRestorativeCommunity.org

<https://therestorativecommunity.org/>

About Guest Writer

The name "Guest Writer" is used on over 100 articles by individuals who are not regular contributors. Their name and a brief bio can be found at the top or bottom of their articles.

<https://nwcitizen.com/entry/open-letter-to-the-community-from-irene-morgan/search/dbc0e04e5406aabb92bec218fda70cce>