

## Talking Points About The Criminal Justice System

- 2.1 million men, women, and children are incarcerated in USA in jails and prisons today
- 6.6 million adults are under correctional supervision (incarcerated, probation, and parole) in USA (2001) ~ 1 out of 32 people
- 600,000 are being released each year from prison
- 97% of everyone who is incarcerated returns to community
- about 85% of those incarcerated have substance abuse problems and with each incarceration the likelihood of their being addicted increases from 75% to 90%
- Most incarcerated people have been arrested numerous times
- 3,300 jails in USA – only about 5% offer any significant programs
- Jails are essentially holding facilities while people await sentencing...appropriate intervention in jails reduces recidivism and increases community safety at a cost savings
- In a recent year .9% (point nine percent – less than a percent) of the Federal Bureau of Prisons budget went to all programs ~ programs clearly promote safety for inmates and staff. Percent of inmates getting help is down – the elimination of parole and “three strikes” has limited incentives inside to motivate inmates to behave and improve themselves
- 16-20% of those incarcerated have serious mental illness
- Many mentally ill inmates also have substance abuse issues and many *substance -abusing* inmates have mental illness issues
- Over 90% of all incarcerated females have been victims of severe physical, emotional, sexual abuse usually by someone they know
- 60-70% of the men and women incarcerated are for non-violent offenses
- Incarceration de-habilitates those who were never habilitated
- After a period of incarceration a person usually leaves with PTSD, rage, severe loss issues, untreated and progressed addiction, and he or she has now been taught in best crime school in country
- A person's *incarceration as punishment* has no direct relationship to their crime and they leave uneducated, uninformed about alternative pro-social behavior or solutions, ashamed and stigmatized by the community, unprepared to re-enter family and community, and with no opportunity to express remorse, heal, and mature

- Women are rarely ever violent and when they are, it is usually against a male who abused them in a relationship
- Women are rarely ever drug traffickers but will take the rap for their lover/dealer with fewer resources for legal defense
- Children of incarcerated men and women are 7x more likely to be incarcerated during their lifetime
- Upon *release-transition-re-entry* an offender returns to a society that could not be more rejecting, more discriminating, more marginalizing, or more permanent barrier ridden – *no matter how hard you try* for the rest of your life ~you cannot become an ex ex-felon
- Services offered through probation and parole *and* in jails and prisons are less than 2% of what is assessed, requested, and needed
- In most cases probation and parole actually set people up to fail: no guidance, no support, no treatment, no education... just *monitoring for a mistake*
- Most states have been on a jail and prison building binge – contributing to the *prison industrial complex*
- Data on the “*Tough on crime*” and “*war on drug*” movements show that these efforts failed and had no significant impact on crime...overall they caught the wrong people and put them in a criminal justice *quicksand* they might never get out of thus diverting resources from violent crime reduction
- Most drug offenders have a court appointed attorney and seldom receive anything but a plea bargain dictated by prosecutors who by legislation have usurped the power from the judges bound by sentence guidelines and mandatory minimum sentences
- If jails and prisons do not improve inmates while incarcerated, they are stealing money from the taxpayer—where is the value added product of this industry?

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