

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
- 98% of everyone who is incarcerated returns to community
- 85% of everyone who is incarcerated has substance abuse problems and with each incarceration the likelihood of becoming addicted increases
- Most incarcerated people have been arrested numerous times
- 3,000 jails in USA – only 5% offer any programs of significance
- 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
- 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 by someone they know
- 60-70% of the men and women incarcerated are for non-violent offenses
- Incarceration de-habilitates those who were never rehabilitated
- After a period of incarceration a person leaves with PTSD, rage, severe loss issues, untreated and progressed addiction, and he or she has been taught in best crime school in country
- A person's *incarceration as punishment* usually 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
- The percentage of inmates receiving significant services in most jails and prisons has gone down with major budget cuts while the public relations campaign exaggerates what is actually being done

- 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
- 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 of a permanent barrier for re-acclimation *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 set people up to fail: no guidance, no support, no treatment, no education... just watching
- State of VA overbuilt prisons – about 4,000 cells at \$50,000 to \$100,000 per cell and finds ways to fill them; DOC is the first or second largest employer in VA
- 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 the criminal justice *quicksand* they might never get out of -- Boot camps, scared straight, etc. may have sounded good but proved to be ineffective
- If jails and prisons do not improve inmates while incarcerated (offer a "value added product"), are they wasting the taxpayer's money and reducing public safety -- an informed citizen needs to know

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