

WHEN IS IT ENOUGH

I have 21 years behind these walls. I never figured my life would spin out this way. When I was a young man I was buck wild. I rode the iron horse and lived by no mans rules. Being a free spirit brought me in to contact with the prison system at an early age. I bowed to no man. When push came to shove I used what ever means was necessary to protect my family,myself. You can only beat "the man" for so long,then you got to pay the piper. At 24 I took the law in to my own hands,I pulled a trigger. I did five years,on a dime sentence,for armed violence. Now I was paroled and wanted no more of life in a cage. My kids needed me. I went home on the straight and narrow. It did not matter what I did,for destiny had other plans.

I walked the three years of parole off. Bought my home contract for deed. Started my own business. Went to court on parole and got custody of my six year old daughter. It was the best of times in my life. In that little girls eyes I saw the greatest praise a man can feel. In her eyes I was the world. I gave her safety,security, a home where she could be free to be a kid. She did not have to be afraid, to worry about not having a place to live in. The peace that comes with a solid foundation showed in her eyes. She was my shadow and I loved it. Her need for security was what made me become a real man,a father. Then the State stole my dream from me after only four years. Still, they were the best years of my life.

September 17th,1993 was the last day I walked as a free man. The State convicted me of two counts of armed robbery. The sentence was 65 years. Now you know my pedigree. What I speak now comes from my history in this closed society.
(Five On A Dime,prison slang for doing five years on a ten year sentence)

When I served time in the 80's it was a wild time. The prisons in Illinois had a lot of gang violence. Gangs ran a lot of the life behind bars. I did my five calendars in Medium Security Prisons. Those five years I worked as many jobs as I could. I literally worked those years away. The agony of my children growing up, without me there to watch it happen, ate at my soul. It was a big hole I could not fill up. I worked and slept the years away. The first stay of the State had taught me to get my mind right. One thousand, six hundred and ninety-nine days straight without my lady to hold, my kids to hug, good food to eat, broke--me, of any ideas I had of life outside the rules of society. I went home to be the father I had so miserably failed at as a young man.

I was convicted of two counts of armed robbery I did not do. I serve this sentence and time due to only one fact, the inept actions of my public defender. He took one look at me and decided I was guilty. He betrayed the contract of my counsel, and sold me down the river. He destroyed my family with his arrogant attitude. I gave him all the evidence to investigate. To prepare to shred the State's case on the stand. He lied to me. At my trial he did not call one witness in my defense, or produce one document to rebut the State's false evidence. The circumstantial evidence used to convict me was false and manufactured. This happens in our criminal court system everyday. Public Defenders are overworked, underpaid, and jaded. After years of unappreciated work some turn to cranking out the cases as fast as possible. More cases, more money. This causes the P.D. to start making judgements on guilty, then time spent on case, which allows the innocent to fall thru the cracks in the system. The greatest betrayal happens when the Public Defender

turns his back on his client. Canon Rule Seven states,"a lawyer must defend his client to the best of his ability,to go to what ever lengths are necessary to produce the best defense possible." Our prisons are full of men who did not get a fair trial for this very reason,they were cast on America's reject pile by their Public Defender.

This is the cards I have been dealt to play. I am not the same man I was in 1993. I have become a "Jailhouse Lawyer." I fight to bring change to the prison system. As the reader you might ask yourself,now,why you should continue to read his story? I think I can tell you why. Your tax dollars pay for this prison system that is a major failure. If I was the taxpayer I would demand a whole lot more for the money that is taken from my check each week. The recidivism rate it Illinois is at 70 %. That means that every prisoner released back in to your neighborhood will be back within a year. That person will come back with a more violent crime. A longer sentence you will now pay for. I thought he was suppose to be rehabilitated when he served his first prison term. Sadly he was not,as his body was warehoused,but his mind was not cured. The State title of Department Of Corrections;is a cruel joke on the Taxpayer. There is no corrections. There is no rehabilitation. There is only lazy State workers that have become complacent in their roles.

If you,the citizen,does not demand more from the prison staff the system fails. There is no one to blame but yourself. Everyday I watch the security staff come to work,take a chair in the control booth,put their feet up,and earn a large salary for doing nothing. They do not sit on the wing and protect the prisoners. Instead

they sit in the foyer being lazy. The law requires the security officer to be seated at the desk placed at the head of the wing. Each building has four wings in an X shape. There are two tiers of cells on each wing. Two men per cell. 28 cells on the top deck, 24 cells on the bottom deck. A total of 104 prisoners on each wing. The required security measure by law is not followed. The guards have grown lazy with power from their Union. They do not sit on the wings and protect the prisoner from assault. This is the very job you, the taxpayer, are charged for each week. Yes, the money taken out of your check pays these state employees salaries. You also pay out the lawsuit settlements, from your check, when these prisoners are killed, beaten, raped, while the guards sit in the control booth playing cards and reading papers. If you want more facts on this pick up a copy of the "PRISON LEGAL NEWS" out of Seattle Washington.

The pendulum swung from, liberal treatment and rehabilitation, to hard core punishment, while President Bush had his eight years in office. Little Bush let the right wing watch dogs know he had their backs, that they could do anything and he would protect them. The Prison Litigation Reform Act done great damage to the prison system in place. Only a well educated jailhouse lawyer can understand and navigate the Federal Court system now. The rule put in place on the grievance procedure created a loophole for the State Prison Administration. If the grievances forms are denied to the prisoner; he is retaliated against for filing his grievance, and then the grievance is thrown away by staff, he can never seek redress in a court of law. Therefore the prison administrators and staff

can never be held accountable for their illegal actions while acting under the color of law. Who, what did he just say? What is acting under the color of law? Here is the definition of that very act from the ORAN'S DICTIONARY OF THE LAW: "COLOR, appearance or semblance; looking real or true on the surface, but actually false. For example, acting "under color of law" is taking an action that looks official or appears to be backed by law, but which is not. "

In Illinois the hard hand of the extreme right wing has created a system ripe for civil rights violation. As a "Jailhouse Lawyer" I have become quite the civil rights litigator. Why should you, the taxpayer, care about this. Well, let me explain it in real simple terms. I go to court, I win a cash settlement, it is paid out of your taxes, so I have a direct pipeline to your wallet. I am retaliated against by prison administrators and staff for exposing their illegal conduct. Then I sue for the retaliation and get paid again. I am getting rich off the taxpayers wallet, and will continue to get richer until you demand change. Oh, one thing I forgot to explain, the guards and prison administrators are State employees. Therefore they are represented by the Attorney General when they are sued for their illegal acts. When found guilty the money does not come out of their pocket, nor do they have to pay for their representation by the Attorney Generals Office. All these funds, millions a year, come from your paycheck people. What a life they have. They can do whatever they want, get free legal representation, get found guilty, cost you millions, and keep their job while you pay the bill.

The prisoner is kept locked in a cell every day. The more the guards keep him locked in a cell the less they have to do. The prisoner is told he must follow the rules. The prisoner was placed

in prison as punishment for breaking one of societies rules. Here he is to be rehabilitated and returned to society as a productive citizen. Hey I did not write it, your constitution of the State of Illinois requires it. Article One-Bill of Rights, Section Eleven states "all penalties shall be determined both according to the seriousness of the offense and with the objective of restoring the offender to useful citizenship."

Well folks that just ain't happening in Illinois. The guards are lazy and heavy handed with retaliation. They lock the prisoner in his cell for as much time as they can get away with. They sit in the control booth, with their feet up reading papers and playing cards. The prisoner is denied his yard time as required by law. He is denied his dayroom time to showers and telephone, general social inter-acting. He is talked to with shameful disrespect by the guards. What are you creating when this happens? Let me answer that for you. I have been watching it happen since the take-back went in to effect in 1996. The hypocrisy in place creates a meaner criminal to be released upon society. Everyday he spends in prison he is told he must follow the rules, he is punished severely if he violates one. Often times he is retaliated against by staff and punished harshly without justification. Everyday he watches the guards screw him out of his yard, exercise, dayroom, commissary, and meals. They do this in blatant violation of the rules and law acting "Under the Color of Law." How do you expect a prisoner to be rehabilitated when everyday he is shown that the one with power does not have to follow the rules? It just makes him mad, meaner as he sit in a cell all day, and waiting to be released

where he can put his lesson learned to work. Again he will seek power by weapon or force. Only there will he have power again. It is the rule of law pounded in to his mental picture everyday he spent in Illinois Prison System. This is why two out of every three released is back with a violent crime and longer sentence. The body was warehoused and the mind corrupted.

Now let talk about money. Illinois pay to play schemes are well and thriving. As the taxpayer you might want to ask why the farms have been shut down? Why the meat to feed the prison population is bought, instead of being raised cost free, on these farms sitting empty? Why you pay millions a year in electric bills for a system that could be self-sufficient. Why you pay millions a year for canned vegetables; when the men locked in a cell all day could be working to plant and raise these same vegetable for free? Why, because then no money could be stolen from the budget in kick backs. This will only change when you, the taxpayer, demands it change. When you hold the staff accountable for their actions. Make them pay for their own lawyers to defend their illegal acts. Make them pay the settlements on civil rights violations out of their pockets, not the state budget. Just go to this website and you will get first hand knowledge of the waste of money, and lawsuits in play, that you are paying for. www.siteground217.com/-westonap/index.php Blagojevich's kick backs from ADM started this monster that is still on going. Why would you feed the men and women a product that makes them sick, when you can raise cattle, pigs, and chicken at no cost to the taxpayer? KICKBACKS!!!!!!!

The Department of Corrections is a joke. The get tough on crime rhetoric, by the politicians; scared the citizen in to building

a prison empire the State budget can not support. The millions needed to keep these prisoners locked up, fed, clothed, and given medical care, eats up money that could be used in our schools, building safer bridges and roads, and providing adequate health care. You are the ones who must demand change. You must demand the farms are opened back up. The beef, pork, chickens, eggs, vegetable raised at no cost to the taxpayer. Start building electric turbines, powered by wind, solar panels, that off-set the millions spent in electric bills each year to maintain the prisons.

The prisoners could do all these jobs at no cost. It is a win-win situation. The men will learn a work skill. Most are the disenfranchised, uneducated masses from the inner city. Most hunger for a job to look forward to each day. They all want to learn a skill. To know they can be looked upon as an equal in society. Can get a job and hold it, be treated equal upon their release. We must cure the mind, not just warehouse the body in a cell all day. The politicians have failed miserably with their get tough on crime rhetoric. The prisons are busting at the seams. Only when you, the taxpayer, demand better for your dollar will things change. When is it enough?

Larry "Rocky" Harris

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