

SUBJECT: Greetings From Camp Fed....

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On purpose, and defining my own -- today, I can advocate for prison reform.

I just finished reading "Caught - The Prison State and The Lockdown of American Politics," by Marie Gottschalk. I'd like to share a little bit about what I've learned recently. My goal is not to convince you of anything. My goal is to give you something to think about -- My goal is to start a conversation that we continue having.

First, some statistics which may shock you, and let me add a caveat about all of these statements by saying the author, Gottschalk, a University of Pennsylvania Professor provides copious sources and well documents all of them. For the purpose of this email, I'm going to forgo the endnotes to maintain some semblance of brevity. If you have any questions about any statistics, ask me individually and I can provide sources.

- \* 2.2 million people are in jail or prison (Bureau of Justice Statistic for 2013)
- \* 8 million people under some form of state control including jail, prison, probation, parole, immigration detention, etc.
- \* 16 million jail admissions in 2012
- \* 6.6 million people spent some time in jail in 2012 -- obviously many of them spent several times in jail.
- \* 8 million children or one in ten minors have an incarcerated parent.
- \* Drug offenders account for 50% of all prisoners in the federal system.
- \* 6 million Americans have had their voting privileges revoked
- \* 7.5% of adults are felons or ex-felons.

#### Incarceration Rates for Select Countries (Based on 2011 Figures)

Louisiana:	1600 per 100,000.
Florida:	875 per 100,000.
U.S.A.:	730 per 100,000.
Russia:	568 per 100,000.
Singapore:	265 per 100,000.
England:	153 per 100,000.
Canada:	117 per 100,000.
France:	96 per 100,000.
Japan:	58 per 100,000.

Local, State and Federal spending on corrections was upwards of 85 billion in 2012. The country spends over 100 billion on police and over 50 billion on the judiciary. No figures are provided on what we, as a nation, pay criminal defense lawyers, but the numbers must also be staggering.

As of 2008, about 750,000 people were directly employed by correctional institutions as guards, supervisors, and other support staff. Many more were employed in corrections through multi-billion dollar private corrections industries which constructs, finances, equips and provides health care, education, food, rehabilitation and other services to prisons and jails. As a point of comparison, the entire workforce of the auto-manufacturing sector totaled 850,000 in 2008.

One in eight state employees works in corrections.

Corrections is one of the fastest grown segments of state budgets since the 1980s, second only to Medicaid.

On prosecutors, the author writes, "So far, U.S. Prosecutors have escaped the kind a scrutiny and accountability that we demand of public officials in a democratic society. Most of their decisions are totally discretionary and virtually unreviewable. To reduce the imprisonment rate, prosecutors will have to be cajoled or pressured into embracing a commitment to sending fewer people to prison. U.S. prosecutors are arguably the most powerful officials in the U.S. criminal justice system and the least transparent."

On bail bonds and the companies that provide them in general, Gottschalk writes "an estimated 500,000 people accused of crimes remain in jail each year because they cannot afford to make bail. Those who remain in jail while awaiting trial are at a distinct disadvantage. They are more likely to be convicted and are more likely to receive a tougher sentence if convicted or if they plead guilty. The use of financial release primarily through commercial bonds increased by about a third between 1992 and 2006. In 1992, release on recognizance was the most common type of pre-trial release. By 2006, about 70% of people charged with a felony were assigned bail money, and during that time, average bail amounts increased by more than \$30,000."



My conclusions -- the penal system and all the elements that comprise that system, both direct and symbiotic, have deep financial interests vested in incarcerating as many people for as long as possible. Their livelihoods depend on it. Furthermore, as prison's privatize and become "for profit" entities, they rely on growth to provide value for shareholders -- growth can only come from increased numbers of prisons, and an increased number of prisoners. Special interest groups like Prosecutors, Commercial Bail Bond Companies, Correction Officer Unions, and private prison companies all spend millions of dollars lobbying politicians to increase sentence lengths, the number of crimes for which people can be charged, and ultimately the number of people in prison. How can this be viewed as anything but a conflict of interest? How can justice be served when the people administering justice make their livings on the backs of those they incarcerate and also stand to gain financially by incarcerating those very same people for longer lengths of time.

Poor people are disproportionately affected by these policies -- economically disadvantaged citizens aren't able to afford bail, they aren't able to afford council and as such, must rely on their defense by Public Defenders who are overworked, and who's salaries also come from the same system (Department of Justice) where the conflict of interest exists to begin with.

Another salient point the author raises -- law enforcement typically makes an assumption of guilt for anyone they target and then manufacture stories to coincide with their own versions of circumstances, and this has definitely been my experience. I am an addict who has struggled most of my adult life with an addiction to crystal meth. Each time I was arrested, I was by myself. Each time I was arrested, I was homeless and indigent. In most cases, a Confidential Information (CI) led officers directly to me. In each case, 8-10 officers with automatic weapons and SWAT gear took me down and coerced my confession using fear tactics.

The first time I was arrested, there was no prior evidence of a crime, when ten officers forced their way into my residence and searched without a warrant, based on a statement from a CI. They found drugs in the residence, after which they told me I wouldn't go to jail if I confessed and cooperated with them to help catch other dealers. Never having been arrested, and growing up in a different era where I had been taught to always cooperate, assist, and tell the truth to law enforcement, I did just that. In doing so, I sealed my fate and went immediately to jail where I sat for 9 months, held on \$100,000.00 bond. The discovery in this case painted a very different picture -- law enforcement described how they politely inquired if they could come into my residence, they asked if I would give them permission to search, and then once having been granted permission, they came across the drugs after which, I quickly confessed, telling them I was "relieved it was all over." Even though the discovery was obviously completely fabricated, (since what person concealing drugs in their residence would knowingly invite law enforcement in to search for drugs,) my public defender told me it was their corroborated words (all 10 of them) against mine...I'm an addict - ergo, a liar, and as such, had no defense.

The next time I was arrested, a CI asked if I could score some drugs for him -- he provided extra money for me to get some for myself, so I did and the same scenario ensued with yelling, swat garbed automatic weapon wielding officers who arrested me. Entrapment or standard operating procedure in Florida? Perhaps both are correct answers.

(One other arrest, which is minor in comparison, involved a possession of meth, but I share it because the circumstances are so ridiculous that they make my point perfectly. I was stopped and searched because I was "walking on the wrong side of the street" -- that was the supposed legal statute I broke which allowed Fort Lauderdale law enforcement to detain me and search me legally.)

It is these two arrests (not including the walking on the wrong side of the street arrest) as I've described them and for which I have been punished and served my time, that make me a career offender and have allowed the state to almost double my sentence on my current charge. My codefendant, who was charged with and convicted of the exact same crime with the same set of circumstances, same proffer, etc. was sentenced to 87 months -- also an extreme sentence in my opinion but five and one half years less than mine. And I mention all of this not to make you feel sorry for me, and not to suggest that somehow, I wasn't guilty of doing what I did. In these cases, I was using and in possession of the drugs they claim, but I was also an addict and indigent at the time of each arrest. I have always felt, as a result of my personal experience which is only anecdotal, that I have always been just a commodity for the Department of Justice (DOJ). There has never been any real interest on the part of the DOJ in helping me or people like me get better. It is a relief to find that my anecdotal experience is factually and statistically corroborated by Gottschalk.

I am a smart guy. Fortunately, I have been able to manipulate the system to get a good result. Knowing what I know now, I feel fortunate to have received the 140 month sentence I received. Yes, you heard me correctly -- 140 months or 12 years is a good result. Those of you following my "Camp Fed" installments have heard me describe other inmates I know who have received mammoth sentences for similar or even much less serious crimes. We are all victims of a system which only seeks to perpetuate itself and financially reward its own participants.

With that, I leave you to decide what you think about all of these issues; and I look forward to hearing what you have to say.