

ABUSE OF PRISONERS IN THE U.S.A.

© Copyright 2005 – WebPastor David Todeschini – All rights reserved

PRISONER ABUSE in AMERICA and duality of ethical standards is something I don't think I'll ever understand; it is akin to Hegelian Dialectics, which is beyond the scope of this article. As far as I'm concerned, a person's ethics are a product of a sane, rational mind. A society's morals, in turn, are an amalgam of its citizen's individual ethics; and it doesn't matter a hill of beans if the government is a republic, a democracy, a police state, or an anarchy... and I'll spare you the 40-page dissertation it would take to make my point.

In the scheme of things, what happened in Abu Gharib prison last week is such a *deminimus* thing, that it hardly warranted the media attention it got. During the Vietnam years, the CIA interrogated enemy POW's with tactics that would curl Joseph Mengele's hair... and nobody said anything. Liberals, and Commie Pink-O's have this incredible knack; Jesus Christ said it best: "...*they strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel.*" Sociology has a name for this propensity to exacerbate the innocuous, and minimizing what's criminal; it is called "boundary maintenance"; it is the means by which an amoral society (or group of people) construct rationalizations to make themselves feel good, or superior to others - technically, to mitigate dissonance - when they have ethical reasons to feel guilty about what they're doing, or what they've done. In other words, someone who murders babies in vivo (performs abortions), becomes a crusader against child abuse; and while it is commendable that he advocates protecting those who have been born, he justifies his belief that abortion is NOT what it really is. Dianetics and Scientology have a term for this too; it is called "a Service Facsimile". I'll leave it up to the reader to do the research, and that done, you will have a clear understanding about why so much fuss was made over "prisoner abuse".

What happened in the Iraqi prison is nothing new; if they wanted so bad to do a story on abuse in prisons, those reporters should see what goes on in Attica and Auburn prisons in New York. Any ex-Con could tell you the stories, but what they'd tell you, you would not believe. New York isn't the worst of the lot, but those photos of Iraqi jails looked like the cell accommodations were clean and spacious, compared to Attica or Auburn, where two men share an 8' x 10' cell, locked in for all but two hours a day. If the ASPCA would lock a CAT in such a cell, under the same conditions 22/7, you'd have P.E.T.A. and all of the other animal rights whack-os out with Pickett signs, and they'd close the place down.

The trouble with Americans (and I'm just as guilty), is that they think everyone else's house needs to be put in order, except ours. I have a friend who was denied Hepatitis-C treatment while he was incarcerated at Groveland Corruptional Facility, in SONYEA, New York. In one of his briefs to the court in the case: Standley vs. Wright, dkt #00CV-6018-FE (WDNY, Dec 2000), his attorney wrote: "... ***The treatment of my client violates all standards of decency, and is a violation of the Geneva Convention III for the treatment of enemy prisoners of war***". Mr. Standley was released from custody by order of the Federal District Court. You didn't read THAT in the newspapers, did you?

Chances are you also never knew that psychological abuse is much worse than physical abuse; but the two are usually inflicted together. Abuse - mental torment, and needless and pointless acts of suppression in prisons all across America, is the reason we have 6 to 19 times the rate of incarceration of any other western European nation. New York has 5 times the number of prisoners as the country of England. The state of California is 3 times worse than THAT! Across-the-board, American prisons boast 80 to 85 percent recidivism rates, and that is due primarily to the "rehab" programs that are run by psychiatrists and criminologists, and the occasional but ubiquitous "*Hick-Farmer Sigmund Freud Wannabe*". It isn't working, and instead of blaming their methodology and their technology, they will tell you that criminals are incorrigible. They will then say that "the programs work", but we know them by their fruit.

The sorry condition with crime in America is largely to blame on our Criminal Justice System. The system is CRIMINAL, and it should be wholly and entirely abolished, and replaced in its entirety with the technology and methodology of Pastoral counseling programs such as those run by Narconon™ and Criminon™ (www.narconon.org and www.criminin.org), Prison Fellowship Ministries, and Kairos Prison Ministries. This is the only approach that works marvelously and miraculously well, in fact.

Psychology is the basis for Criminology, and that is precisely why Criminology is worse than just plain ineffective. If there wasn't so much psychological abuse, I would venture to say that most criminals could become productive members of society. And to tell you the truth, I believe the people who run the prisons know this, because nobody could work in a prison environment for years and years, and NOT observe the glaringly obvious.

Prisons in America have been a growth industry for a very long time. Prisoners are paid Coolie wages (in New York, typically less than 10 cents per hour), and they make license plates, office furniture, bedding, clothing, etc., for all of the State's 70 some-odd prison facilities, plus hospitals, shelters, and State offices. Meanwhile, a typical phone call from a New York prison costs the prisoner's family over \$10.00 (collect via MCI's "special" jailhouse rates). If THAT isn't abuse, it certainly is exploitation.

If that weren't enough, prison guard brutality has taken a new twist; you see, if a guard assaults or abuses a prisoner, and the victim can overcome the burden of proof and substantiate his claim by a physical injury, or by witnesses, the lawsuit could amount to MILLIONS. So what the guards do, is incite (or pay) another inmate to assault their intended victim. This has several distinct advantages:

#1 - The prisoner who is assaulted cannot charge the guards in court, unless he can prove that they "set him up". This is an almost impossible thing to prove.

#2 - The victim, if he values his life, would not identify his attacker(s) for fear of being labeled a snitch. Snitches do not live long in prison; they get attacked and killed, even in "Protective Custody".

#3 - The guards, knowing that the incidence of AIDS and Hepatitis-C is epidemic among the prison population, do not have to put themselves at risk for contracting these diseases via contact with blood or other bodily fluids.

Now some might tell you that nothing like that ever happens in US prisons, but they're lying to you. How many sworn affidavits from people that don't know each other and therefore could not have corroborated their testimony would you like?

The truth of the matter is that US prisons are a virtual cesspool of physical abuse and sexual depravity that far, far exceeds what was disclosed about Abu Ghraib. The reason the public never hears about it, is that The Department of Corruption is very adept at cover-ups, The Corrections Officer's Benevolent Association is a very powerful union, and many times, even the DOCS Inspector General will "white-wash" a situation where there is an unmistakable pattern of abuse.

Now that the politicians have made such a fuss about abuse in Iraq, the question is begging as to why they DO nothing, and HAVE DONE nothing about more serious abuses on our own shores, where prisoner's "rights" are supposed to be protected? (yeah, right!). Now, with abuse in prisons in totalitarian countries in the spotlight, it may be a good a time as ever to focus the microscope on OUR OWN prisons. If a TENTH of what goes on "behind the wall" in US prisons could be documented and proven, there would be a few politicians and several government agencies who KNOW, and HAVE KNOWN about this type of thing for a long time; a few people would have a lot of explaining to do.

Americans have for too long, turned away in apathy from the treatment of its own prisoners. “Correctional Facilities” are NOT what prisons are; they “correct” nothing, and the abuses that have been for so long, well-hidden, is neither deserved, nor is it sanctioned under the 8th. Amendment of the US Constitution.

As I stated before, abuse takes many forms, and abuse of a criminal that the State is supposed to be helping to turn into a law-abiding citizen, is not only an abrogation of duty, it is the very thing that causes recidivism. “Corrections” officials KNOW this; however, If some effaceable methodology was applied to the problem, prisons in the United States would cease to be the growth industry that they are. Thousands of these *Hick-Farmer Sigmund Freud Wannabes* would have to go back to farming, and politicians would lose their main platform tactic - use the public’s fear of crime and their hair-brained schemes (like putting serial numbers on individual bullets) to get stupid people who don’t know any better, to vote for them. Crime in the US is largely the result of abuse and exploitation sub nom as “therapy”. Well, soon “The Merchants of Chaos” will get a taste of their own “rehab”, if I have anything to say about it.

Jack Henry Abbott, author of the best-seller “*In The Belly of The Beast*”, was a victim of the system. Talented and self-educated, he wrote eloquently about the problems. He was unable to escape the effect that years of torment in State institutions had inflicted upon him, and he finally took his own life; he hung himself in his cell at Wende Correctional Facility, in Alden, New York. If my book, in the spirit of his, does anything, I pray that it will introduce a bit of humanity where it is desperately needed, and inspire the only “therapy” that really works: genuine caring.

The United States is unlike any other country in the world; we have laws that are supposed to protect against such abuses, and I’m here to tell you that abuses at Auburn and Attica - two notorious US Gaols, make Abu Ghraib pale in comparison.

Now seems as good a time as any, to focus on prison conditions in OUR OWN backyard; it would be more difficult for the politicians to deny it is happening, or apply the tactic of minimization to the irrefutable mountain of evidence that exists in the form of complaints filed with FBI/USDJ, and never acted upon... indeed, never even investigated unless there was a dead body to explain.

The Criminal Justice System and the Penal System in this country is destroying lives and creating criminals. The politicians benefit by being “tough on crime”. The small prison towns benefit by commerce to support the prisons, and the fact that prison populations are included in the host County’s (or town’s) census numbers. Often, the prison population exceeds the population of the towns around it. Jobs are created where there would otherwise be little else to do but farm vegetables, and “everybody wins” except the prisoner (who is supposed to be rehabilitated), his or her family, and the community they are finally released into.

Statistics show that more than 80% re-enter the prison system shortly after their release. Could it be that instead of prisoners being what the Criminologists claim: incorrigible, the abuse and suppression they suffer day after day, CAUSES them to be or become prone to criminal tendencies? Could it be that State-sanctioned vengeance (“Justice”) leads to intractable anti-social and criminal behavior? “*You shall know them by their fruits*”, the bible tells us. For all of their “education”, the top Criminologists have succeeded only in creating a more skilled, ruthless, and unremorseful breed of criminal. No matter what they may tell you, there is NO SUCH THING as a “deterrent”. People follow their ethics. Where ethics get corrupted, crime happens. Rehabilitate a person’s ethics, restore a man’s self-respect, and enable him to be self-determined and independent, and you no longer have a criminal, or anyone you have to worry about. Take the opposite approach, and contaminate his ethics with “moral reasoning” classes, hold his past (which he has no power to change) against him, and attempt to control every move he makes, and you will get the exact obverse of what you seek; a person who will rebel against the suppression imposed against him, by asserting his “rightness” over it, and he does this by REPEATING the original behavior, only THIS time, it may be much worse.

Pastoral counseling and Prison Ministries are the only way to achieve sanity in the prison system. Some of these ministries are also working to stop the abuses in prisons, by advocating for the victims of violence and rape (Stop Prison Rape, Inc.). For a safer society, we need to create another system entirely; the one we have now, is worse than useless, and it cannot be “reformed”.

The fact of the matter is, that we have on our own shores, a much worse problem than Abu Ghraib. We need to clean up our own prison system, before we worry too much about taking the Hypocritical high ground about how we treat enemy prisoners of war.

