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## SUFFER THE CHILDREN

By Hung Nam Tran

Did you know that today two out of three young males under the age of 23 had been arrested, jailed, imprisoned or put on parole? By the time these young people reached the age of 19, they had already amassed lengthy criminal records which judges use to increase their sentences. Young people are among the poorest in the nation. While those over 65 has net worth over \$170,494, 85% of college graduate live with parents and have an average of \$25,250 in debt. The federal government spent \$480 billion on Medicare but only \$68 billions on education, \$63 billion on prescription drugs but only \$3 billion on Head Start. America spent a ratio of 7 to 1 on older people versus the young. Fifty eight percent of baby boomer has \$250,000 in discretionary money while an average person under 35 has \$33,777 in debt. Furthermore, young people frequently don't own a home, don't have 401(k), IRA, pension, annuity, stock, bond or extra money. For a sixteen year old who has no job, no car, no home or any asset, he couldn't even stay in the shelter. He can't apply for welfare, social security, section 8 housing, meals on wheel or unemployment benefits. Meanwhile, a sixty year old who has no asset receives all these benefits from the government and much more.

Beside the older age group, young males are doing poorly than the young women in the same age groups as well. According to the 2010 census report, single women have brought houses twice the rate of single men. For every female sent to prison, there is 50 men are incarcerated. Young women are outnumbering young men with college degree by a ratio of 2 to 1. The U.S. Department of Justice released crime statistic in 2007 showed 95% of men are incarcerated for sex crime even though male virgins outnumber females on campus. Fifty five percent of college graduate between the ages of 25-29 are women. From 1930 to 2007, women income grew an astonishing rate of 44% compare to 6% for men. In a 2010 study, women between 22 to 30 earned 8% more than men. Hanna Rosin, a writer for Atlantic in July/August 2010 stated that women held 51.4% of managerial position and professional jobs, an increase of 26% since 1980. Male median wage had fallen 32% since 1973 and three quarter out of 7.5 million jobs lost in recession of 2008 are men.

While these economic and social statistics are stacked against young men, it is the psychological and emotional abuses many of the same young men endured in the criminal justice system that is much worse. Prison, society reasoned, are a fitting place for social misfits. But which action constitutes social misfit depends upon where we live and it can be easily mischaracterized or misconstrued by overzealous prosecutors. Boys can never be boys anymore and many of their normal interactions in the past are considered mentally ill or criminal today. An energetic youngster often diagnosed as having ADHD or ADD. It is no wonder that boys are more medicated than ever before. The innocent actions of being boys such as curiosity often view as criminal or disruptive. This past summer, a six year boy in Sauk County, Wisconsin was charged with criminal sexual assault when he inadvertently looked under his classmate skirt while pulling down her panty. This past election the *Chetek Reporter*, a newspaper in Barron County, Wisconsin, reported a Republican assemblyman made a comment that "some girl rape easy." He pointed out an incident in which a 17 year old teenager was charged with statutory rape for having a sex relation with his 16 year old girl friend even though both of them consented. The economic, political and social disadvantages imposed on young males are pale compare to the mental anguish they have to endure while trying to survive in the prison system.

Going to prison supposes to be punishment not being systematically abused while in prison. The United States prisons provide the most destructive and harsh system in the world starting from the time of arrest to release. Most people in the free world abhor government agents doing pat down search when they boarding plane and consider such action invasive. Yet, young males including juveniles as young as six years old when being detained by police are subjected to initial and subsequent strip

searches in which complete strangers requiring them to expose their genitals, lifting their private parts to prove they got nothing to hide and then forcing them to spread their butt cheeks in order for these complete strangers look into their orifices. It is the most degrading and humiliating experience young males must experience on a frequent basis. Those who are shy, uncomfortable or outright angry about these invasive techniques often refused such searches. As the result, police or prison guards would hold them down, strip or cut off their clothes while beating them senseless for such refusal. In every these instances, judges will upheld the police conducts citing safety, security or management of the executive branch without a single thought about the humiliating experiences imposed upon these young minds. It is not uncommon to see these young people withdrawing into a corner, crying privately, depress and wanting to die. The entire experiences shocked, terrified and traumatized them. As long as they are incarcerated, they will continue experience such blatant law enforcement techniques again and again. Yet, such brutality treatment does not stop here. Prison guards often beat youngsters into submission and get away with it. In one incident at Wisconsin Resource Center in Winnebago, Wisconsin, a facility designed for mentally ill prisoners, I witnessed an inmate stuck his hand outside the metal trap door to get attention from a prison guard. That guard seemed annoy and deliberately closed the trap door and broke that youngster hand. When I protest such brutality, prison official would tell me to mind my own business. At Oshkosh Correctional Institute in Oshkosh, Wisconsin prison guards are running the facility like their own private army. When one inmate insulted a unit manager, prison guards would literally beat him senseless until he passed out. Hundred of us reported the incident to the FBI and despite hundred of eye witnessed accounts; the FBI concluded the inmate was posing a threat to the prison guards. How a young inmate weighing 115 lbs on the bottom of the pile while 16 prison guards pummeled him for at least 15 minutes with baton and fists is considered a threat to the guards is beyond belief. Even when such incident reported, one law enforcement agency assists another in cover up. Such deliberate indifference treatment demonstrates to the young mind there is no hope and violence is a part of prison life one must endure. No matter how bad the situation, the prisoner could not escape from such hellish nightmare nor could he beg his mom and pa to intervene. Nor could any of his fellow prisoners intervene even if they wanted too. Thus, suicide often is the only option left among the young because they cannot shout loud enough beyond prison walls so that someone can hear them nor are they skill enough to write, inform or mobilize the public to come to the rescue and neither would the unsuspecting members of the public would believe them over that of prison officials. Physical assault is just one of the many incidents in U.S. prisons. Frequently, the infliction of pain is more emotional and psychological then physical. Most prisons provide some of the most unappetizing food in the world and very low quality. In addition, the proportion is so small it makes happy meal looks like a giant feast. For many of these growing youngsters who need a lot more calories then an average person, the inadequate amount of food often leave them in constant hunger pain and with frequent headaches. When the guard union demands more money from the administration, they cut the inmate services such as food. When the legislature tightens the budget, prison official would cut the food budget or inmate's meager incomes while protecting union wages and exuberant benefits of prison guards. Even during surplus years, prison administrators would spent lavishly throwing themselves banquets, picnics or parties but never restore back the food budget. If anyone has the opportunity visiting prison, one need to look no farther then around many prison officials offices. They are equipped with state of the art computers, luxurious leather chairs, mahogany desks, sophisticate phone, laser printers, cameras, listening device, stealth radios and many modern amenities while inmates are provided with metal chairs or tables to eat, work or play. Education department which supposed to speed up inmates to the 21<sup>st</sup> century are equipped with donated computer like Commodore 64 or Microsoft 286K so that prison administrators can show the public how tight theirs budget really is but in reality it is a fraud and manipulation by these officials. The real injury is young people who lives in a structurally dangerous environment where services provided to them by the taxpayers are laying on the wayside. It is no



wonder prisons developed the best retention system in the world because they exploit the dark side and bring out the worst in people. While family connections are one of the best remedies for rehabilitation, prison officials go to great length to make arbitrary rules prevent family contacts or limiting the amount of phone calls or charging inmates exuberant fees and while enjoying kickbacks. These might seem to be just policy matter but the real effect is that it prevents an escape outlet for human frailty especially among the young. If these young people have frequent contacts with their family, they would likely to be calmer and more would cooperate with prison authority. In addition, research has been shown that families provide many positive influences into young people lives than any prison programs or melted punishment imposed on them. Prisons relentlessly strive to prevent any type of close relationship inmates have with one another or family in order to drive insanity into a person. It is no wonder most who left prison often would be diagnosed with either depression, antisocial personality disorder or psychopathy. These inner pain and injury are the direct result from years of abuse due to the restrictive prison policies which designed to punish youngsters rather than rehabilitated them. This is one of the most preventable cruelties of our day.

In addition, prison policy often concerns with day to day management rather than the welfare of those in their custody. Young inmates are often left fend for themselves not only attacks from prison officials but other dangerous criminals as well. The U.S. Supreme Court has noted that teenager minds are not fully developed, yet, many lower courts in fashion sentences rarely take into consideration the recklessness of youth. Young white males are considered commodity in prison. Older males or blacks often coerce, manipulate or entice younger ones for sexual gratification. For those who refused, physical assaults, verbal abuses or rapes frequently are the outcome. Yet, few prisons separate these youngsters from these hardcore convicts such as providing them with a youth facility. Young white males who joined gangs to protect themselves are also victimized by their own peers. They are considered "tricks" where they must either prostitute themselves or black mail other inmates in order to bring money to the gangs for protection. If they don't join the gang they are considered "neutrino" upon which they often get rape in the showers, in their own cells or by a large group of men on a daily basis. A few youngsters choose to take their own lives as a way to end the suffering. The prison conditions in the United States are so horrible, it is unfathomable why the general public has not called for it overhaul.

When those three American hikers got capture by the Iranian in 2011, the government of Iran allowed them a large feast at the Iranian government's expense when their mothers come to visit. When the last time prisons in the U.S. treat kids this way? When my mother was sent to the communist prison in Vietnam, I came and live with her on every weekend for years. Had any member of the American public ever seen U.S. prison officials allowed the inmates children to spend even a night with their mom or dad? American public often ridicule other country for brutality against its own citizens, yet, it is a few country actually locked up its own children and sometimes for life. Many of these kids languished behind bars for years without anyone care for them, love them or even acknowledge their existence. Few judges ever consider the passage of time, the level of maturity and the change in behavior in order to reduce or modify their sentences. More public outcry is given to those who abused dogs then these children. No one ever celebrate their birthdays, they receive no Christmas gift nor given the chance see their parents on a dying bed. Few if any even remember the opportunity to have a nice homemade meal or a hug and a kiss. No one tell them I love you and many of their family members starting to fade away as years passed by. These are the invisible pain and suffering these young men endure much more prevalent than the economic or social penalty. Yet, these are the kind of things we as member of society can alleviate by twitching a few policies which are cruelly enforced by their overseers. It is no wonder those whose convictions had been exonerated rarely or seldomly blame the criminal justice system or its procedures for their mistreatment rather they squarely point their fingers directly at the condition of confinements operated by prison officials are their main cause of their malfeasance. Who in society is going to speak for these children or is it the world has no place for these kids anymore?