

TREASURE AND TRASH

When I was a little boy I used to love to help my Dad load the trunk of our 51 Chevy for a trip to the trash dump, or to be politically correct "the landfill". No matter what its called it's a place where people dump stuff they don't want. My father was a master at spotting perfectly good treasures other people threw out as trash, some of it was of questionable value like vacuum tube stabilizer racks, headless mannequins and blast doodles with copper fringes, but a lot of it was stuff in perfectly good condition, people just wanted to dispose of it. I would sneak away from Dad on my own treasure hunt trying to beat the bulldozer as it mindlessly crushed really neat stuff into totally useless garbage. I found a Red Rider BB gun in perfect condition, Dad found TV sets, radios and tools. Like proud hunters we carefully stored our trophies in the trunk we just emptied of our trash.

Once we got home our loot never made it past the domicile Customs Agent, Mom. She would start with Dad "Dad how many times have I told you not to bring that dirty stuff from the dumps!" Pleading our case, we would both say "But, its perfectly good stuff." And, every time Mom would come back "Its TRASH from the garbage dump! people threw it away for a reason! Its dirty, I don't want it in my house, now take it back!" I know Dad snuck some of his loot pass customs, but to keep the peace all of my trash trophies and most of Dad's found its way back to the dump, as once again trash.

Now, as an old man, I find myself in one of society's ultimate multi-billion dollar social dump yard: California State Prison System. I can't help but think back when I was a kid wondering why people would throw away perfectly good stuff. Now, ironically, I see people doing it with perfectly good human beings, young and old men dumped and treated as persona non grata, unwanted social trash. Men being crushed into useless garbage under the bulldozer blades of brutally long sentences. Those who survive the crushing brutality of time come out like the BB gun I found, they are perfectly good, but carry the "dump" stigma of "Ex Con", "Convicted Felon" "Offender" "Parolee". My mother didn't want that BB gun in the house because it was from the "dump". Mother's don't want scarlet lettered men in their homes; men that are human versions of that BB gun. The ugly statistic of 70% unemployment of parolees speaks to people's attitude about stuff from the "dump". So, with little social acceptance and no means of support the perfectly good parolee, like the BB gun, finds his way back to the dump. California's so called system of "Rehabilitation" has a recidivism rate of 70%

Professing "Rehabilitation", but showing a failure rate of 70%, one would think California would be ashamed supporting a multi-billion dollar mega-prison complex housing over 100,000+ (one hundred thousand plus) prisoners. Not so! Wall Street sees treasure in California's social trash. Private prisons like Corrections Corporation of America are cashing-in popping up all over the United States like mini-storage units for human beings. California is a favorite customer spending hundreds of millions of dollars to store 9,000 prisoners out-of-state and just recently committing \$24 Million to lease a 2,400 bed prison in the desert to dump more prisoners. California prison guards are the highest paid guards in the world, vendors are realizing lucrative contracts, lawyers are piling caviar on their plates and politicians get politically fatter convincing voters they're safe because the social dumps are filling up. California is so committed to keeping their dumps status quo they have spent tens of millions of dollars fighting the federal court, who has found California's system cruel and unusual punishment. Why find a cure for crime when the disease is so profitable?

In general, people have only two questions: 1) How safe am I? 2) How much will it cost me? With this in mind the hasty generalizations: "Prisoners" "Convicted Felons" "Convicts" and "Dump BB Guns" are dangerous; is money in

Unfortunately, this tough-on-crime solution is doing more damage than repair. Perfectly good men who could be beneficial to society are thrown under the bulldozer blades crushing them into costly dump yard liabilities. Long periods of social isolation may be an immediate fix, however without some positive intellectual sublimation, the effects are extremely corrosive (monster making).

Being a denizen of the social dump, I see first hand the good and bad social trash. Young men hungry for knowledge and guidance who are treasures, yet deemed trash by a system that is less than perfect itself. Under the incredible burden of oppressively long sentences, I admire how they persevere dodging the bulldozer blades wanting to crush them into useless social garbage. These men could be productive contributors to society. However, sorting the trash and utilizing the good to society's benefit and humanely releasing old prisoners, would not be in the best interest of the grand financial scheme of the multi-billion dollar mega-prison complex business.

The clear emergence of corporations seeing prisoners as commodities for financial gain, lucrative salaries, handsome pensions, bulging contracts, seasoned with political gain, there is bankable treasure in assuring the trash pile grows.

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Robert H. Outman
Prisoner P-79939

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