



Courtney McFadden, Staff Advisor
courtney.d.mcfadden@doc.state.or.us
 PH: 503-378-2289

Lifers' Unlimited Club Newsletter Oregon State Penitentiary

Chartered 1968
 Volume 52 Issue 2

February 2020

My name is gossip. I have no respect for justice. I main without killing. I break hearts and ruin lives. I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age. The more I am quoted, the more I am believed. I flourish at every level of society. My victims are helpless against me, because I have no name and no face. To track me down is impossible. Once I touch your life it is never quite the same. My name is gossip. Malicious gossip is an insidious enemy and no one's friend.

Solomon O. Osiris

Inside This Issue

A Health Tidbit	11
Coercive Plea Bargaining	10
Death Penalty Unworthy of America	3
Hellish World: Mental Health Crisis	8
I Struggled to Help a Prisoner...	1
Lifers Brain Change Panel	4
Prisoners Lives Matter	4

I Struggled to Help a Prisoner.

In Norway, I Found a Better Way

By TOBY TOOLEY as told to MAURICE CHAMMAH

I was visiting prisons in Norway, but I kept thinking about Mr. G back home. By 2018, I'd been working in "segregation" units for more than a decade, having come to corrections after working security in a hospital, managing aggressive behavior in the E.R. At the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem, I worked with people who had to be isolated from the rest of the population because they posed a serious management concern. Many had a mental illness. I thought there wasn't anything I hadn't seen.

At the time, Mr. G was probably our biggest challenge. He was in prison for assault and 'aggravated' harassment and he had been diagnosed with severe mental illness. He told us that he'd been a productive member of society until a psychological break in his 30s. He would smear feces all over his cell. He would hit his forehead against the wall until it opened up, and then keep aggravating the wound; for much of 2016 and 2017, the wound never closed. He would yell all day and night, until he was hoarse, all about raping people, killing people, killing the president. He didn't have voices in his head, but he had poor impulse control: if his mind suggested he do something aggressive, he would just do it.

It boiled down to control. He was punishing the staff, because when he'd hurt himself we'd need to take him out of his cell and take him to medical. He was so restricted that this was one of his only ways of expressing frustration. If we'd come to the front of his cell when he was screaming, he would stop and apologize, and we would write it off—"It's just Mr. G being Mr. G"—and move on to help someone else. But then he'd start up again.

Because of this behavior, he was rarely let out of his cell. He would lose his daily privileges, meaning he only really got out for rec for about two hours a week, for showers, and whenever a trained team had to go in and clean up the feces in his cell. He was

Continued on page 2

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Lifers' Unlimited Club is to unite the incarcerated men of OSP with a goal of improving the quality of life for those inside and outside of these walls. The club will work with charity programs, informational services, youth speaking panels and other positive programs. We cannot change the past, however, we believe through rehabilitation and pro-social behavior we can create a more productive future.

Continued from page 1

trapped in a cycle. We were trapped in a cycle. In Norway, I realized how much I had to learn.

Our agency is working with Amend, an American organization that exposes correctional officers here to the way they do things in Europe. In the Fall of 2018, we traveled to a number of prisons in Norway, shadowing people with jobs similar to our own. We slept at the homes of Norwegian officers and shared meals with them. Some of the prisons looked extremely different from our own—more like college campuses, with lots of trees and stores and libraries—but I felt more familiarity at Ila Detention and Security Prison, outside Oslo, which houses a population similar to our own behavioral health unit.

They told us they break the cycle of aggressive behavior and isolation by treating every day as an opportunity to start over and meet the men where they're at. The day before, you've exhausted every method of making their day better, but the next morning, you start over, asking yourself: What can we do to give that person a better day? They were very into having conversations without any physical barrier. In our own prisons, when we talk to a prisoner in their cell, we are on the other side of metal bars. In Norway, they just have doors, and they open them and stand in the doorway, and they believed this would lead to a more normal, human conversation.

While in Norway, seeing these spic and span prisons, sometimes I would think, *Surely they don't have the same issues, surely they don't have guys smearing feces around the cells and attacking officers.* So I decided to test them. I volunteered to play the role of a prisoner, and when a Norwegian officer tried to talk to me I charged at him. He was well trained, and pinned me down to the floor. "Are you done now?" he asked. "Can we stand up?" It wasn't what he said, but how he said it: He was so calm.

Some things we couldn't bring over, like the staffing ratios. They told us that throughout the country, they have roughly one staff member for each person incarcerated, while here in Oregon we have roughly 4,400 staff for a population of 14,800. But we felt we could learn from how they talked, how they treated each day as a new day.

When we returned, and spent more time training with Amend, we kept talking about Mr. G in particular: *If we can help him, we thought, we can help anyone.* We had a recreational cell that had been repainted with a tropical theme, full of waterfalls and birds and a beach scene. (One of our bosses was Hawaiian and said the most relaxing environment he could think of was a beach.) We put Mr. G in belly restraints, with his wrists at his waist, and escorted him to the room. He was in awe at all the colors, and he started talking up a storm. We chatted with him, asking, have you ever seen a beach? Where did you used to go on vacation? We'd never had these conversations before: we were so busy managing the behavior that we weren't thinking as much about the person. He told us he was an artist, and that he liked to draw and paint. We took off his wrist restraints and gave him pen and paper. He drew up a storm: faces of clowns, of Yoda. We debriefed and we thought, What if the smearing feces is something we could connect to something more appropriate? Then we thought, *What if we repaint his cell with chalkboard paint?*

Now, he covers everything with art. He draws a lot of rabbits. He does watercolors of flowers with his counselor. He also told us he used to play in a band. There was a guitar in the unit, and we'd never felt comfortable giving it to him before because we were afraid of what he'd do with the materials, but he just immediately launched into "Jailhouse Blues." He's getting out of his cell a lot more, going to art class and movie class, where prisoners use movies to discuss conflict resolution. We'll just put him in a room before or after a meal, with a pen and paper. It sounds so simple, but it slows his mind down, and helps him avoid aggressive, impulsive behavior. He stopped smearing feces for months at a time.

And we've taken this approach to the rest of the unit. We don't have enough staff to take people to the tropical room all the time, but correctional officers will give up their breaks and lunches to take guys there, knowing it will give them a better day.

Amend, the organization working with the prison on this new approach, conducted an interview with my wife. She said I'd done a 180 socially, reacting more thoughtfully to tense situations. She says I "Norway our children," responding in a calm way when our 5-year-old is acting out. Hearing her speak, I got goosebumps. I thought I was so good at being a dad, at being an officer. But going to Norway helped me be a better person. ✕

Toby Tooley is a correctional captain at Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem, Oregon. He supervises the state's death row, the prison's disciplinary segregation unit and three independent mental-health housing units.

This article was originally published by The Marshall Project, which advocates nationally for criminal justice and prison reform.

If you, your friends, or family are experiencing difficulty with the Telmate system,
the official Telmate Customer Service Number is: 866-516-0115

The death penalty is unworthy of America

By Editorial Board / CURE National

The death penalty in the United States is in decline. It is less used, less popular and just as unnecessary as ever, according to a year-end report from the Death Penalty Information Center, which tracks death penalty numbers. This should represent a way station toward the punishment's eventual elimination — not a temporary low in its application.

For the fifth year in a row, fewer than 30 people were executed and fewer than 50 people were sentenced to death. Half of states representing half the population no longer execute people. With the New Hampshire legislature's abolition of capital punishment last year, the punishment has been banned across New England and in all Northeastern states save Pennsylvania, where the governor has imposed a moratorium.

Seven states executed 22 inmates last year, and Texas was responsible for nearly half. The state is also responsible for a large share of new death sentences. No one was executed west of Texas. Juries in California, the state with the largest death row population, handed down three new death sentences in 2019. But California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) declared a moratorium and ordered San Quentin State Prison's execution chamber dismantled. Otherwise, new death sentences mostly came in the South, particularly in Florida.

Death sentences are down some 90 percent from their mid-1990s peak. Executions are down some 77 percent from the late 1990s.

Even so, the death penalty survives, as does the horrifying possibility that the government might kill an innocent person. Two more death-row inmates were exonerated in 2019. That makes 166 exonerees since 1973.

As always, those executed are not necessarily the worst of the worst but the least capable of defending themselves. The center found that “at least 19 of the 22 prisoners who were executed this year had one or more of the following impairments: significant evidence of mental illness; evidence of brain injury, developmental brain damage, or an IQ in the intellectually disabled range; or chronic serious childhood trauma, neglect, and/or abuse.”

It is little wonder — and heartening — that public opinion is evolving. Sixty percent of Americans said in a 2019 Gallup poll that life without the possibility of parole is a better penalty for murder than death. That was the first time Gallup reported a majority holding that position. The Trump Justice Department, however, failed to get the memo, pushing suddenly and unexpectedly last year to execute federal inmates for the first time in 16 years.

The death penalty is expensive, unfairly implemented and unworthy of a justice system that strives for equal application of the law. Yet even if it could be applied fairly, state-sponsored killing would be unworthy of a nation founded on the principle of individual dignity. ✕



Out of the Darkness

Suicide knows no race, age, gender, religion, or social status.

Anyone can be affected by such a tragedy.

The AFSP is a non-profit organization exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research, education, advocacy, and reaching those impacted by suicide.

May 8th 2020

We are hosting a walk on OSP yard to bring awareness and support.

If you're interested in participating, please kyte
Lifers' Unlimited Club. Open to all level 2 and 3 AIC.

Lifer's Brain Change Panel ATTENTION FELLOW LIFERS

By Shawn Freitag

My name is Shawn Freitag; I have been in prison going on 32 years. Some of you know me, others don't. For those who don't know me, you could say I am a rights activist. For close to 10 years, off and on, I was a legal assistant at SRCL.

So let's get to the point. Were you sentenced to prison when you were below the age of 25? If you were, there have been changes in laws and scientific breakthroughs regarding the brain chemistry of young men and women. Studies have proven that the male brain does not fully mature until 25 years old, and in females until 22 years of age.

Why should you care? Well, a person who fits this criterion is not fully responsible for the choices he or she has made before this maturation occurs, and in a court of law he or she must be treated differently than other criminal defendants.

For a person below the age of 17 and charged with Aggravated Murder (ORS 163.095) was excluded from the death penalty and possibly life without parole. This is extremely important being that most of us were coerced with the threat of the death penalty into pleading guilty and taking life without parole sentences. If you were excluded from these penalties, the D.A. could not coerce you with the threat of these possibilities.

I want to know who would be interested in a legal panel designed to understand the results of these studies and the laws revolving around it. The panel would be named, Lifer's Brain Change Panel. The criteria would be centered on those whom this affects.

Please write the Lifers' Unlimited Club to express your interest in this.

Thank you, my fellow lifers.

Have a laugh...



My grandfather hates television. Ask him and he'll tell you the tube is "stultifying" and "addictive." "The plug-in drug," he calls it.

Not long ago, Grandpa discovered my five-year-old brother, Frankie, watching TV with his nose practically on the screen. Appalled, he called me over.

"Look!" he shouted, pointing to Frankie. "Now he's snorting it!"

A customer calls a florist shop to order a bouquet of flowers.

"Make it bright and festive looking," she said. "I want it to cheer up my friend who just lost her seeing eye dog."

Prisoners' Lives Matter

By Bobby Bostic: serving 241 years in MO.

From *CURE: LifeLong Newsletter*

People don't stop being human when they offend society and commit crimes. On the contrary, we lose some of our best citizens in their prime. In fact, it is inside their cells that many prisoners rehabilitate themselves, coming out into society as reformed people, having left the older version of their lives behind on prison shelves.

Instead of further breaking down the fallen, we should pick them up, or let them drink from the fountain of change until they do away with their hiccup. They did wrong and must be held accountable for their acts. Recidivism is a blight on society and statistics prove these facts.

Men and women deserve a second chance when they are locked away in prison. These are our fellow citizens who went astray with their vision. A prison number doesn't make them any less of a human being; we all just have to guide them back to a civilized way of seeing.

Drugs play a major role in their fall. Addicted to chemical substances and under the influence of alcohol, many were at their lowest common denominator when they became criminals; therefore, we must all stand up and mentor better choices for the millennials.

We can't just lock up our citizens and throw away the key. The ultimate goal is to rehabilitate them so they can contribute to society. The world can't afford to only see incarcerated people through the lens of their past clutter and clatter.

Although we must never forget victims of crime, prisoners' lives still matter. ✕

LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS: BHU FUNDRAISER



Classic Coconut - 2 Left

\$10.00

➤ **Classic Gingerbread – 6 Left**

➤ **Classic Irish Cream – 1 Left**

➤ **Classic Chocolate – 2 Left**

Red Velvet -5 \$6.00

Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430

Place you cd-28 in the white box located at the stairs to Activities

Pizza Fundraiser

Please pay attention to the delivery dates below.

#1: Friday March 6th for D-Block

#2: Friday March 13th E-Block

#3: Friday March 20th C-Block

#4: Friday March 27th A Block & DRU

Approximate delivery 6:00pm

**If you move to a different Block,
The system will follow you, and depending
on the date you move your delivery
may be deferred to the last available date.
NO REFUNDS UNLESS TRANSFERED**

LIFERS' CLUB COFFEE



- Drip Cone: \$6.00
- Coffee Filters: \$6.00

\$7.00 Coffee

- French Vanilla
- Blue Berry Cobbler
- NEC Choc. Cappuccino

1Pound Bags

- Death Wish \$25.00
- Dutch Bros \$17.00



BIZZY
Cold Brew
Dark Roast
12oz \$15.00 ea

\$10.00 Coffee

- Kauai Coconut Car. Crunch
- SB Morning Joe DARK
- SB Pike Place Med. Roast
- SB Colombia
- SB Espresso
- SB Sumatra Dark 12oz
- SB Caramel 12oz
- SB Verona Dark (DECAF)
- Folgers Premium Dark 1850
- Tully's Espresso Dark

Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430

Place you cd-28 in the white box located at the stairs to Activities

LIFERS' UNLIMITED CLUB

➤Maple Bacon \$15.00 (2 left)

➤Red Velvet \$15.00 (2 left)

➤Wht, Russian \$15.00 (2 left)

➤PB & Jelly \$15.00 (2 left)

➤Mustachio \$15.00 (1 left)

Big Train Drink Mix

- Cookies n Cream (1)
- Orange Cream (1)
- Chocolate Mint (1)

SALE PRICE

SALE PRICE
\$23.00

3.5 lb Bag

**This is the last of the
Bones Coffee and the Drink Mix.**

Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430

Lifers' Seasonal Blends

StarBucks Peppermint Mocha	- 16-Left
StarBucks Holiday Blend	- 19-Left
StarBucks Pumpkin Spice	- 27-Left
StarBucks Golden S'mores Blonde	- 50-Left
Cameron's Toasted Southern Pecan	- 3-Left

\$10.00 per Bag LIMITED SUPPLY

LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS

Frontier Deluxe Veggie Mix

1 Pound Bulk Bag

All-Natural, Kosher **\$18.00**

Non-Irradiated

No Additives

No Preservatives

Certified Gluten Free

Rated 4 out of 5 Stars

(Carrots, onions, potatoes, peas,
tomatoes, celery, peppers and beans)

Approximately 5 lb of fresh
Vegetables per bag!



- 9 Flavor S.S Liquid Creamers
Salted Caramel, French Vanilla,
Italian Sweet Creme, Original,
Cafe Mocha, Cinnamon Vanilla
Creme, Vanilla, Caramel, Irish
Creme, Hazelnut
- No refrigeration needed



180 prepackaged cups:
\$34.00

#2480...NO REFUNDS UNLESS TRANSFERED

A 'hellish world': the mental health crisis overwhelming America's prisons

The Guardian

By Alisa Roth

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Ken Kesey describes two kinds of patients in the psychiatric hospital where the story is set: Acutes ("because the doctors figure them still sick enough to be fixed") and Chronics (who are "in for good, the staff concedes").

When Kristopher Rodriguez, a 31-year-old man from Florida, first went into the U.S. criminal justice system in 2008, it seemed like he would have been classified as an Acute; now nearly a decade later, he would almost certainly qualify as a Chronic.

A tall, strapping boy whose friends called him Dino, as in "dinosaur", Rodriguez was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was around 14. His mother, Gemma Pena, had come home from work one night to find that he had disconnected the hot water heater, convinced that the C.I.A. was using it to spy on him.

At first she thought his behavior was simply evidence of grief over his grandmother's death a few months earlier; Rodriguez had been especially close to her. But when he continued to act strangely, saying he was hearing voices, Pena called the police and had him hospitalized against his will.

It was the first of perhaps a dozen times he had him "Baker Acted", as it is known in Florida – after the 1971 law governing involuntary hospitalizations. The next few years were a blur of doctors appointments, drug use, homelessness, arrests and voluntary and involuntary hospitalizations.

Rodriguez is currently serving a 10-year sentence in a Florida state prison for trying to rob somebody at gunpoint when he was 22. He spent five years in jail before he took the plea bargain; people with mental illness often spend far longer in jail waiting for their cases to be resolved.

During his time in jail, he was sick enough that he had to be hospitalized three separate times – twice for psychiatric crises and once because he was so psychotic that he mutilated his genitals. His mother said the second psychiatric hospitalization was the last time she saw him lucid.

Nevertheless, after he accepted a plea bargain (One wonders how Florida's department of corrections was not notified of the extent of his illness before he arrived). After a few months of occasional run-ins with prison staff, he was moved to a unit for prisoners with mental illness.

About a year ago, his condition deteriorated to such an extent that he was moved to the Lake Correctional Institution, a prison north-west of Orlando that is equipped with an inpatient psychiatric unit.

Even so, his mother says, her son remains severely psychotic, an assessment apparently shared by the Florida department of corrections, which regularly denies Pena visits on the basis that Rodriguez is too sick to see her.

More than 50 years after Kesey's novel, state psychiatric hospitals of the sort he described are, like lobotomies, long gone. Yet if we think that the hellish world Kesey captured belongs to another era, we are deluded.

It's true that the *hospitals* have mostly disappeared: between 1950 and 2000 the number of people with serious mental illness living in psychiatric institutions dropped from almost half a million to about 50,000. But none of the rest of it has gone away, not the cruelty, the filth, the bad food or the brutality. Nor, most importantly, has the large population of people with mental illness, like Rodriguez, who are kept largely out of sight, their poor treatment invisible to most ordinary Americans.

The only real difference between Kesey's time and our own is that the mistreatment of people with mental illness now happens in jails and prisons. Today, the country's largest providers of psychiatric care are not hospitals at all, but rather the jails in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City.

Across the country, correctional facilities are struggling with the reality that they have become the nation's de facto mental healthcare providers, although they are hopelessly ill equipped for the job. They are now contending with tens of thousands of people with mental illness who, by some counts, make up as much as half of their populations.

Little acknowledged in public debate, this situation is readily apparent in almost every correctional facility in the country. In Michigan, roughly half of all people in county jails have a mental illness, and nearly a quarter of people in state prisons do. In 2016, the state spent nearly \$4m on psychiatric medication for state prisoners. In Iowa about a third of people in prison have a serious mental illness; another quarter have a chronic mental health diagnosis.

Meanwhile, nearly half of the people executed nationwide between 2000 and 2015 had been diagnosed with a mental illness and/or substance use disorder in their adult lives. When a legal settlement required California to build a psychiatric unit on its death row at San Quentin the 40 beds were filled immediately.

The mental health crisis is especially pronounced among women prisoners: one study by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 75% of women incarcerated in jails and prisons had a mental illness, as compared with just over 60% and 55% of men, respectively. A more recent study showed that 20% of women in jail and 30% of men in prison had experienced "serious psychological distress" in the month before the survey, compared with 14% and 26% of men, respectively.

Although the overall number of people behind bars in the U.S. has decreased in recent years, the proportion of prisoners with mental illness has continued to go up. In 2010, about 30% of people at New York's Rikers Island jail had a mental illness; in 2014, the figure rose to 40%, and by 2017 it had gone up to 43%. Studies of the most frequently arrested people in New York, Los Angeles and elsewhere have found that they are far more likely than others to have mental illness, to require antipsychotic medications while incarcerated and to have a substance use problem.

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8

That there are so many people with mental illness locked in our jails and prisons is but one piece of the crisis. Along with race and poverty, mental illness has become a salient feature of mass incarceration, one that must be accounted for in any discussion about criminal justice reform.

Mental illness affects every aspect of the criminal justice system, from policing to the courts to prisons and beyond. Nor are the effects limited to the criminal justice system; many people with mental illness cycle back and forth between jail or prison and living in the community.

The racial inequity of the criminal justice system has been widely noted: it is estimated that one out of every three African American men and one out of every six Hispanic men born in 2001 will be arrested in their lifetimes.

But for Americans with serious mental illness, it is estimated that as many as one in two will be arrested at some point in their lives. It's not just arrests. One in four of the nearly 1,000 fatal police shootings in 2016 involved a person with mental illness, according to a study by the Washington Post. The Post estimated that mental illness was a factor in a quarter of fatal police shootings in 2017, too.

People with mental illness are among the most disadvantaged members of our society, and when they end up in the criminal justice system, they tend to fare worse than others. People with mental illness are less likely to make bail and more likely to face longer sentences. They are more likely to end up in solitary confinement, less likely to make parole and more likely to commit suicide.

Yet jail and prison have become, for many people, their primary means of getting mental healthcare. Their experiences offer an especially eye-opening view of a criminal justice system that today houses more than two million people and costs us hundreds of billions of dollars a year.

Gemma Pena says that she writes her son regularly but that it's been years since Kristopher has written back. She sent him pictures of herself and his brothers and nieces, but he tore them up.

When she does get to visit him, the son who used to take pride in being a natty dresser smells terrible and is often visibly dirty, as if he hasn't bathed in weeks, even though she regularly puts money into his commissary account so that he can buy toiletries.

During their last visit he got so agitated, yelling and pounding his fists on the table, that the corrections officers handcuffed and shackled him, and took him away strapped into a wheelchair. His medical records show that his medication compliance has been spotty; sometimes Rodriguez refuses to take it, and other times it hasn't been available because the supplier didn't deliver it to the prison.

For years now, Rodriguez has been stuck in this sad limbo: according to the state, he is well enough to stay incarcerated, but far too sick to live in the general prison population or even to get regular visits from his mother.

Lawyers who have examined his case say his story is typical. Florida's prisons have been the subject of repeated investigations for their treatment of prisoners with mental illness; so have jails and prisons in other states, including California, Illinois and Alabama.

The investigations are critical, as are the changes to policy and protocol that they can produce. But jails and prisons are filled with thousands of people like Kristopher Rodriguez, and as long as we continue to lock them up, the problem is going to keep getting worse.

Adapted from Insane: America's Criminal Treatment of Mental Illness. Copyright 2018 by Alisa Roth. Available from Basic Books, an imprint of Perseus Books, a division of PBG Publishing, LLC, a subsidiary of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS CONTINUOUS...

Sale of Replacement Tooth Brushes: \$12.00

Replacement Heads: 2pk for \$11.00



NO REFUNDS UNLESS TRANSFERRED

Tuff-Enuff Long Rain Coats

Approved at all Oregon Prisons.

You can take it with you.



\$14.50

**Available in XL thru 2XL ONLY! the one in the photo is 2X
48in Long CLEAR .20 mm PVC 100 % WATER PROOF**

Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430

Coercive Plea Bargaining Has Poisoned the Criminal Justice System. It's Time to Suck the Venom Out.

From Cure: LifeLong Newsletter

Downloaded article

In 2006 George Alvarez was charged with assaulting a prison guard while awaiting trial on public intoxication. He knew he didn't do it – the guards actually jumped him – but the ten-year mandatory minimum sentence at trial scared him so much that he pled guilty. Little did he know that the government had a video proving his innocence, but they buried it long enough for prosecutors to extract the plea first. George spent almost four years behind bars fighting for his innocence before finally being exonerated.

In 2015, Lavette Mayes got in a fight with her mother-in-law. She had no criminal history and had sustained injuries herself, yet a prosecutor charged her with aggravated assault, and a judge set her bail at \$250,000. Unable to pay, she spent fourteen months in jail awaiting trial, unable to see or touch her children once. She lost her job. She developed health problems. Even after getting released on bond and downgraded to an ankle monitor, she struggled to resume her previous life due to the trauma she'd experienced while incarcerated. So instead of spending years fighting her case in failing health, she pled guilty to end the ordeal.

Just last year, the state of Georgia executed Ray Cromartie for a 1994 murder. The case against him was paper-thin and Cromartie maintained his innocence until the end, but Georgia denied every request for DNA testing that could have set the record straight. A lesser-known fact about the case is that 20 years ago, Georgia prosecutors offered Cromartie a plea deal under which he could have been paroled after seven years and free by now. But Cromartie refused to admit guilt, and so the state retaliated by seeking the death penalty and ultimately killing him.

These heartbreaking stories illustrate the damned if you do, damned if you don't nature of criminal justice in America today. Succumb to coercive tactics like evidence suppression and pretrial detention like George and Lavette, and begrudgingly accept a conviction with lifetime consequences. Or assert your constitutional rights, like Ray and face certain retribution.

This impossible choice we call plea bargaining takes place tens of thousands of times every day in America. It's now over 95 percent of state and federal convictions occur, with minority defendants receiving disproportionately worse offers. In fact, in 2012 the Supreme Court said that "plea bargaining...is not some adjunct to the criminal justice system; it is the criminal justice system."

Criminal case dockets have become so bloated in the last fifty years as Americans have disastrously over-relied on the criminal legal system to solve all our problems. Pressure-packed, conveyor-belt plea bargaining has become the only release valve. The grossly divergent sentences offered to defendants who plead guilty versus those who don't – often called the "trial penalty" – proves just how divorced from public safety, justice or even rationality this system is.

Plea bargaining would be an acceptable way to resolve criminal cases if it were a fair fight between prosecution and defense; but it's not. Since roughly the 1970's and the accompanying War on Drugs, prosecutors have been handed – and in many cases lobbied for – increasingly punitive tools to pressure defendants to take bad deals. These tools include:

- Pretrial detention to separate defendants from family, jobs and community
- Mandatory minimums and sentence enhancements that ratchet up the trial penalty
- Lax discovery rules that allow prosecutors to hide favorable evidence during negotiations, as in George Alvarez's case
- Virtually zero transparency requirements, which robs defendants, defense lawyers, and voters the ability to scrutinize how the deals get done.
- Supreme Court precedent that allows judges to rubber stamp the deals without asking the prosecutor a single question about how they used these tools. Instead, at a typical plea acceptance hearing, the judge asks the defendant whether they felt coerced, which is a bit like asking the hostage if the kidnapper played fair while the hostage still has a gun to their head.

In other words, plea bargaining as practiced today has turned our criminal legal system into a cheap backroom shakedown. There is virtually no process, much less due process. Defendants' lives are determined primarily by power dynamics and leverage, not facts and law. And it all occurs almost entirely behind closed doors, rather than in front of a judge, a jury, and the American public, as the founding fathers intended.

To be fair, jury decisions aren't perfect. Juries are made of people, and people are flawed, biased, and often vindictive. They often get the verdict and/or the sentence wrong. But they're drawn from a reflective pool of the community; in all states but one [Oregon], they have to return a unanimous verdict; they get to review all the evidence; and when they get it wrong, defendants can appeal. None of that is true of the typical plea bargain in America today.

We don't need to eliminate all plea bargains or punish all prosecutors and judges to fix the problem. Indeed, if negotiated fairly, plea deals can be beneficial to all sides and promote justice and public safety. But we need to establish commonsense guidelines around the process, such that defendants who want to negotiate can do so on a level playing field. All we ask is a fair fight. ✕

A Health Tid-Bit

“Pretty Conclusive Evidence”

Submitted by J.R Oslund

Soon after World War II, Oxford University closed its nutrition department, as it was thought that the subject of nutrition had been exhausted. The evidence was out. We knew everything we needed to know. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Nutritional information seems to be changing all the time. Take the subject of sugar for example. When high fructose syrup hit the market it was thought of as a superior, healthy replacement for sugar. Sounds preposterous to us now. Consumer awareness has led food manufacturers to ensure that “no high fructose corn syrup” can be read on products such as bread and soda.

Robert Lustig, MD, Professor of Clinical Pediatrics in the Division of Endocrinology at the University of California, San Francisco says that whether a food item has sugar or high fructose corn syrup in it is inconsequential in relation to the amount that both are being consumed in our nation. His lecture, “Sugar: The Bitter Truth,” found on YouTube, has received 1.2 million hits. For years, sugar has been seen as a factor in weight gain and disease only because it is an empty calorie that replaces more nutritious foods. But Lustig claims that fructose in particular is the bad guy. Typically, we over-consume fructose in foods containing high fructose corn syrup and sugar. High fructose corn syrup and white table sugar are roughly half fructose, half glucose. In contrast, starches such as bread, pasta, rice, and potatoes are made up of glucose molecules. Unlike glucose, which is readily absorbed and needed by every cell to make energy, fructose must be metabolized by the liver. Consuming sugar means more work for the liver than if you consumed the same number of calories from starch (glucose). And if you drink the sugar, as in soda, the wallop of fructose will hit the liver more quickly. The speed with which the liver has to do its work affects how it metabolizes the sugar. In other words, drinking a can of soda is going to have a different metabolic effect than if you consumed the same amount of fructose in apples. One of these effects is weight gain.

Fructose is under close scrutiny as being a major player in America’s weight control problem. Lustig explains that when fructose enters the liver hard and fast, it is converted into fat, fat in the blood (triglycerides) and body fat. Fructose also quiets leptin’s voice. Leptin is a hormone that is stimulated when a sufficient amount of food has been consumed. It signals the brain to inhibit appetite. Fructose, however, induces what is called leptin resistance. The brain’s ability to read or perceive leptin becomes diminished. The appetite control center continues to send out the signal “I’m still hungry” even though an adequate amount of food has already been eaten. As a result, the individual does not feel full and is spurred to eat more.

Typically, we over-consume fructose in foods containing high fructose corn syrup and sugar.

Excessive weight, in and of itself, is a large factor in cardiovascular disease. But fructose’s effect on our heart health does not stop here. In an experiment comparing sugar molecules, fructose stood out in its ability to impact the development of an “atherogenic lipid profile.” An atherogenic lipid profile is basically referring to elevated triglycerides (fat in the blood), high LDL (L for lousy) cholesterol, lower HDL (H for healthy) cholesterol, and higher total cholesterol. This kind of profile is characteristic of those who have or are developing cardiovascular disease and have early rheumatoid arthritis. LDL cholesterol actually has two forms. There is a form that is considered neutral and another, lethal. This second form is dense, small and does not float. It is the kind that initiates plaque development. Guess what has been found to raise this kind of LDL? A high fructose diet.

Another way that fructose appears to encourage heart disease is in its circuitous way of raising blood pressure. As the liver has to process excessive amounts of fructose, biochemical reactions occur in which uric acid becomes a by-product. Elevated uric acid levels are implicated in gout. They also have been associated with hypertension. As the volume of fructose in the diet increases, uric acid and blood pressure increase as well.

Consider another scourge of our era: metabolic syndrome. It includes the above mentioned health concerns along with abdominal obesity and elevated blood sugar levels, implying insulin resistance. When consumed in high quantities, it has been found to contribute to tissue insulin insensitivity. One in five are said to be affected. High fructose intake is increasingly recognized as causative in development of pre-diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

Towards the end of his lecture, Lustig compared excessive fructose consumptions to chronic ethanol exposure. Ethanol, you will remember, is the fermented sugar we call alcohol. Of the 12 listed symptoms of chronic ethanol exposure, these were found in common: Hypertension, myocardial infarction, dyslipidemia (abnormal amount of lipids or fat molecules in the blood), pancreatitis, obesity, liver dysfunction, and habituation if not addiction. These symptoms can also result from years of excessive fructose intake.

Could this be what the counsel we received on health over 100 years ago is referring to? We were told that when sugar intake becomes “largely used, immoderately, excessively, far too much eaten” that it “causes fermentation, and this clouds the brain.” “The free use of sugar in any form tends to clog the system, and is not infrequently a cause of disease.” ✕

**Lifers' Unlimited Club
Executive Body**

President: Robert Kelley
Vice President: Brian Waybrant
Secretary: Troy Ramsey
Treasurer: Bill Knepper
Facilitator: Stephen Weavill

Proposal Updates

Proposal	Status
Food Truck	Pending
Gaming Console rentals	Pending



This is a sketch of the art being done for the Lifers section of the chow hall mural.

Announcements/Upcoming Events

2020 Meeting Dates

March 12th Legal Seminar
 April 9th Eating Contest?
 May 14th Animal Shelter
 June 11th Nominations
 July 9th Elections
 August 13th 1st Banquet
 September 10th 2nd Banquet
 October 8th General Meeting
 November 12th Fundraiser
 December 10th Holiday party

«Name»
 «Cell»

