

# The Revolving Door Crime Wave

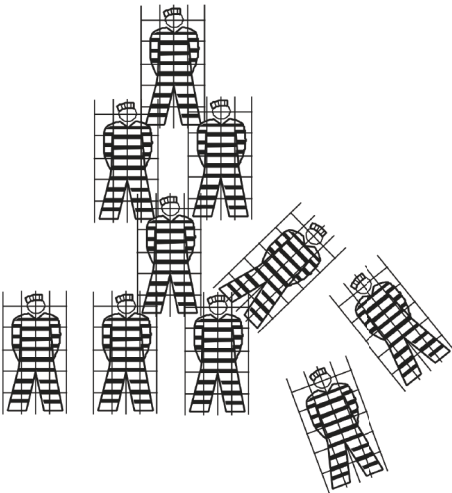
With democracy the pendulum usually swings back when things go too far, and yet for decades high crime has ripped across the US. America is the only western country with third-world crime rates. Over one million Americans have been murdered in the last sixty years. Milwaukee for example has a homicide rate thirty-seven times (37x) higher than the European Union. Crime could be the key policy, the most winnable, that could shatter toxic progressive ideology. Conservatives run myopic campaigns of ineptitude. 'Back the Badge' is fine but proves that conservatives have retreated to the fringes of sanity, that it even needs to be said. Let's try something different. Turn the tables. Go on offense. Win the Culture War.

Chris Kemble first published this column on crime and liberal criminal justice policies back in 2005. The original article appeared in the opinion journal, *WI: Wisconsin Interest*. Chris has updated his original work with the latest data. As you read the original part of the article from sixteen years ago, it is amazing how many of the issues and insights that Chris raises are still relevant and fundamental to the debate we are having today in this country on lenient sentencing of crimes and low bail. He has written articles published at *Federalist Society*, *American Thinker*, *Wisconsin Interest*, *Natural Gas Now* and *Canada Free Press*.

Brett Healy, president, *Maclver Institute*

## Part 1 - the first 40 years

(published 2005 as *CRIME MOUNTAIN, FORTY YEARS OF LIBERAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE*)



For decades the political left has engaged in ideological warfare in the arena of crime policy, making anything like objectivity the first casualty. Additionally, many on the right have been surprisingly wishy-washy about the efficacy of tough prison sentencing. Prominent conservatives like William Bennett, Robert Bork, and John Dilulio, Jr. predicted exploding crime rates in the late 1990s because of youth demographic increases, and in spite of toughening sentencing standards.<sup>1</sup> These predictions were wrong.

This article documents when and why the contemporary crime wave started, some idea of the magnitude of the disaster, when and why crime started its dramatic fall, the left's gobbledygook and ever changing explanations, and why the left will not admit its soft crime policies are a failure.

America is recovering from an epic criminal justice disaster. In the 1950s crime was low and sentencing tough. But a revolution was sweeping the country. Elitists, sure they knew better, gained control of the criminal justice system. They believed criminals were misunderstood and prisons a waste.

Circuit Court Chief Judge Bazelon called prison dehumanizing, vindictive, primitive, and irrational; and criminals the scapegoats of failed society. Supreme Court Justices Brennan and Douglas called for rehabilitation from experts in behavioral sciences. Attorney General Ramsey Clark labeled prison an angry response that would not reduce crime. The Earl Warren Supreme Court and other courts

professionalized criminals with many new rights.<sup>2</sup> And so sentencing fell and crime exploded.<sup>3</sup> The revolving door justice system was born, where the predators were back on the street before the paperwork was filled out.

In little over ten years the homicide rate doubled, murders of police officers tripled, and the overall violent crime rate also tripled.<sup>4</sup> Rather than remorseful, many liberals were gleeful, saying it proved how evil America is. They demanded more rehabilitation, more free housing, poverty programs, job training, etc.

Criminologists dreamed up new explanations every year: failing schools, changes in the drug trade, demographics, the economy, lack of gun control, or failing social institutions.

Inadequate street lighting was touted as a root cause of crime, and enormous expenditures followed to “take back the night”. The left’s soft crime policies and the abused criminals were never responsible. Waves of rehabilitation programs were dreamed up, funded, and claims of success made. But crime in fact kept skyrocketing.

Liberals sneered about the evils of American society and those obstructionist conservatives. They controlled Congress, with Democrats holding both houses for twenty-six straight years from 1955 to 1981,<sup>5</sup> and an increasingly frightened public went along. Between 1960 and 1990 social spending grew 380% more than defense spending.<sup>6</sup> High crime was good for the left, they got all the programs they wanted.

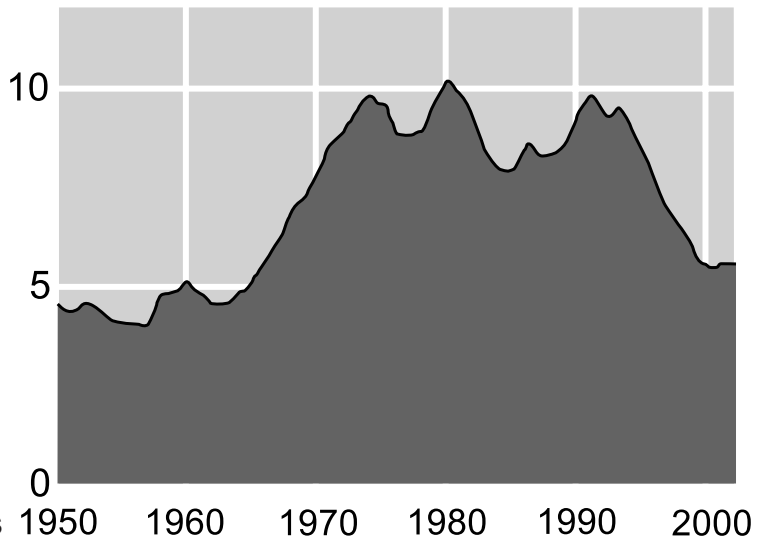
I live in Milwaukee and watched in disgust as homicides rose year after year. In 1958 there were eleven homicides for the year. In the early 1960s the murder rate was five homicides per 100,000. By 1991 it had rocketed 500% to 25.6 per 100,000<sup>7</sup> with 168 killed. The politicians are now thrilled it is down to 88 dead for 2004.<sup>8</sup> They might be more restrained if they knew only thirty-seven people were murdered in 1962 in the entire state of Wisconsin, population 4,000,000.<sup>9</sup>

Forty years of liberal criminal justice created the greatest social disaster in U.S. history, and a highly racist disaster that has devastated minorities the most. The homicide mountain that resulted can be seen at the US Bureau of Justice web site. It represents a terrible truth. Subtracting the 1950’s rates from the 1960’s through the 1990’s rates puts the size of the mountain at over 320,000 additional homicides.<sup>10</sup> That is even more than American deaths in World War I.<sup>11</sup>

Homicide rose less than any other category of crime. While the homicide rate was doubling; property crime, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft were tripling; rape and robbery were quadrupling; and aggravated assault rate was quintupling.<sup>12</sup> The overall crime mountain for the 1960s to 1990s is 100 million crimes above 1950’s rates. The crime mountains of violence and burglary are also plotted against expected punishment in six graphs in the *NCPA Reynolds Report*.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps it seems impossible that such madness could go unchallenged, but it did. The liberal media carried the water, reporting the views of radical social critics, and the latest theories of criminologists.

Homicide victimization, 1950-2002  
Rate per 100,000 population



<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/hmrt.htm>

## COMPARISON OF HOMICIDE RATES: 1950s VERSUS RECENT DECADES

Decade	Average U.S. population millions <sup>a</sup>	Average Homicide Rate per 100,000 population <sup>b</sup>	Actual Homicide average per year	Calculated average at 1950s 4.42 rate	Difference Actual-Calculated times 10 years per decade
1950s	165.5	4.42	7,315		
1960s	191.5	5.51	10,552	8,464	20,870
1970s	215.0	9.06	19,479	9,503	99,760
1980s	237.5	8.74	20,758	10,498	102,600
1990s	265.0	8.14	21,571	11,713	98,580
<b>Total Increase</b>					<b>321,810</b>

a. US average population: <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/ma.html>

b. Homicide rate average: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/hmrt.htm>

To them the criminals were more victims than those whose lives were shattered by crime. The media glorified some criminals like the Black Panthers, treating them like freedom fighters. By 1993 violent crime had risen 470% nationwide.<sup>14</sup> The incarceration rate per crime had fallen to less than 1%, with forty-three million crimes resulting in only 400,000 prison sentences.<sup>15</sup> A telling symbol of big city life were the pathetic little signs in parked cars saying NO RADIO, telling thieves there was nothing left inside to steal.

The big crime story of the late 1990s was the incredible turnaround in New York City. It seemed that new mayor, Rudy Giuliani, and his police commissioner, Bill Bratton, had worked miracles. In only a few years homicides had dropped from over 2200 a year to under 800,<sup>16</sup> and other crimes like auto theft had dropped even more. They had made important changes by cracking down on what liberals call victimless and petty crime.<sup>17</sup> It turned out that many of the petty criminals were also committing horrific crimes, or carrying guns or drugs.

The media misnamed it the “Broken Windows” policy, as if it was about the perception of social order and not the enforcement of law. Factually, much more than this was wrong with the explanation. The media slant was that new police tactics and computerized tracking were key, and the police and the mayor were only too eager to take the credit.

### America Wakes Up to the Importance of Sentencing

The crime reduction actually began two years before Giuliani was elected, and it was occurring all over the country. Other big cities like LA, Washington DC, and New Orleans soon had similar reductions in crime without changing police tactics.<sup>18</sup> The real reason crime was falling was tougher sentencing; with many new laws reducing judicial discretion, requiring longer and mandatory sentencing, and restricting parole.<sup>19</sup>

From 1990 to 1996, the number of offenders sent to prison per 1000 arrests rose 33%. Additionally parole releases fell during the same period. By 1999 forty states had passed “Truth-In-Sentencing” laws after a 1994 federal law tied funding to it. Prison time served also increased because some states had restricted early release, eliminated parole, or adopted get-tough measures that returned increasing numbers of parolees to jail.<sup>20</sup>

One change in the political climate that contributed to crime reduction was the birth of conservative talk radio starting in the late 1980s. With every judicial candidate in the country claiming they were tough on crime, conservative broadcasters helped separate for their listeners the liberal sheep in wolf's clothing from those who really would crack down on crime.

With stunning hypocrisy big government liberals turned to economic arguments against prison expansion. The left showed little compassion when it came to protecting honest citizens from the crime epidemic they created. Furthermore studies show that protecting law abiding citizens is actually a bargain for society.

Violent crime in the U.S. costs over \$400 billion a year. Locking up criminals rather than letting them roam the streets eliminates property theft and damage, cash loss, medical expenses, and lost pay from lost work. Indirect costs include pain and suffering, insurance, decreased work productivity, and moving expenses. The *Milwaukee Journal*, in 1993, concluded that one gun shot wounding could typically cost more than \$5 million over 35 years. Three separate studies each concluded that one dollar spent on incarcerating felons actually saves the community about two dollars.<sup>21</sup>

Prison expansion has gone on despite the screams of protest. How expensive are prisons really? After a decade of prison expansion and the passage of the toughest "Truth-In-Sentencing" law in the nation, the Wisconsin corrections expense is only 6% of the state budget. For 2004-2005 the corrections budget is \$730 million in a state total budget of almost \$12 billion.<sup>22</sup> With tougher policy has come a flattening out of the incarceration totals. Between 1993 and 2003 the Wisconsin incarceration rate per 100,000 rose from 173 to 392. Very importantly almost all of that rise occurred in the first few years, since 1999 incarcerations have barely risen as crime continues to fall. Wisconsin's "Truth-In-Sentencing" law passed in 1998 has done what it should. It's made sentences meaningful and brought greater accountability to the criminal justice system. Since its passage crime has continued to fall.<sup>23</sup>

Do liberals admit their policies caused catastrophe? No, many do not even admit that there ever was a crime wave.

The extreme of liberal denial is illustrated by their refusal to admit crime was skyrocketing in the 1960s. With the left wing revolving door justice system putting criminals back on the street, all categories of crime were shooting up. So liberals simply denied it, saying that increased reporting or better collection of data were responsible for the statistical changes.<sup>24</sup> As James Q. Wilson said, "By 1970, enough members of the liberal audience had had their typewriters stolen to make it difficult to deny the existence of a crime wave."<sup>25</sup>

Left wingers seem to be getting away with their fraudulent explanations, as most Americans seem oblivious to this history of carnage. The left's policies led to millions of additional crimes. They blocked efforts to reverse course for decades. Excepting only the Civil War, they caused the worst bloodbath in American history. But high crime was their engine for getting \$100s and \$100s of billions in government programs.

Their moral temporizing throws gasoline on the fires. Liberals say crime is understandable and even justified because the criminals are victims of an evil society. They don't tell thugs to reform, instead they give them rationalizations for their crimes.

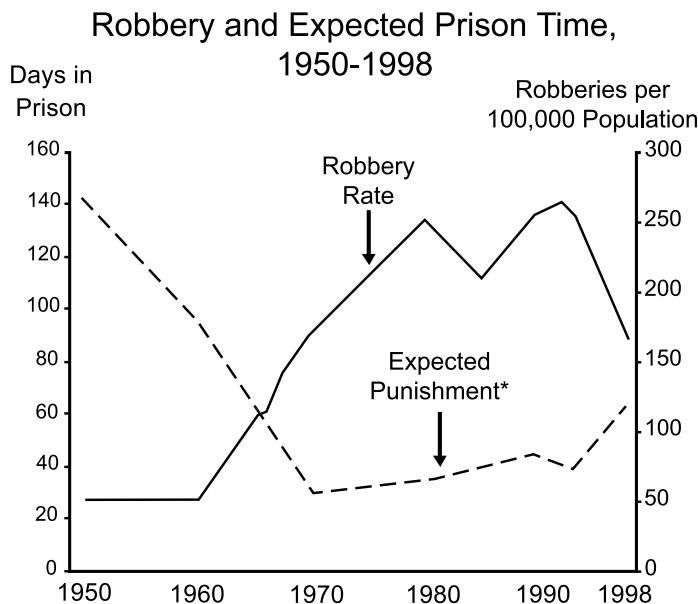
The *NCPA Morgan Reynolds Report* plots federal crime data against actual prison time served per offense. The report covers 48 years and measures serious crime collectively and five major categories individually.<sup>26</sup> The graphs are all similar. When actual prison time went up crime plunged

even in tough economic times, and when actual prison time went down, crime skyrocketed even during economic booms.

A December 2004 Associated Press article documents further drops in crime with the usual slant. Tougher sentencing is not mentioned but attribution is given to “the crash of the crack cocaine market that fueled violence.”<sup>27</sup> Who can refute the logic that crime is falling because there is less crime?

A front page New Year’s Day 2005 article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* declared “Homicides Plunge to 16-year Low, Causes cited range from weather to policing”.<sup>28</sup> This same paper only weeks before had run a four- part front page series attacking “Truth-In-Sentencing”.<sup>29</sup> When it came to reporting another drop in crime not one word on tough sentencing policy, but check your thermometer.

I write about Milwaukee because I live here, but the trends have been the same across the country for decades. All the convoluted leftist theories combined cannot explain the crime mountain rising in the 1950s and 1960s and falling in the 1990s. But tough sentencing standards in the 1950s and a return to tough sentencing in the 1990s match the results exactly. So great is the liberal deceit that tough crime policy is often not even mentioned as a possible explanation.



One of five crime categories graphed against expected prison time from NCPA Reynolds Report.

\* Defined as probability of prison per crime times median days served in prison.

<http://www.ncpa.org/studies/s229/s229.html>

The poverty/economy/employment-supposed link to crime is stated so many times most people think it is established fact. Economic extremes like the Roaring Twenties, Great Depression, Go-Go 1960s, the early Reagan Depression with double-digit unemployment, and the booming late Reagan economy should tell us something. Not only did homicide and other crime not move as predicted, in each case it shot in the opposite direction. In fact the correlation is historically negative.<sup>30</sup>

Jewish concentration camp survivor Dr. Viktor E. Frankl observed from the most extreme conditions of suffering and cruelty, that man chooses his attitudes and actions.<sup>31</sup> Tough sanctions are the bedrock of a just and safe society. Liberal intervention before, rehabilitation during, and support after prison could coexist with a tough criminal justice system. Extremist media spin and intellectual fraud must be exposed and the left should admit its soft crime policies are a total failure.

Crime has dropped ten straight years and is down now 33% nationwide, in contradiction to predictions it would rise.<sup>32</sup> Voters have been ignoring the wisdom of elitist intellectuals and criminologists, and have crushed liberal judges and politicians on election day. But reversals may be ahead if people forget the stakes. Because on the left there is no remorse, no apology, no admission of failure, and no lesson learned.

# The Revolving Door Crime Wave

## Part 2 - the last 20 years

'On the Left there is no remorse, no apology, no admission of failure and no lesson learned.' The leftist mantra that America is bad and the criminals are victims has not changed. Progressive crime policy is an epic, decades long trainwreck. Progressives have been given \$100s & \$100s of billions to fix social issues anyway they wanted. Total failure and record crime are the results. Crime could be the key policy and the most winnable.

Truth-In-Sentencing was a great victory and worked as expected. After a few years not only was crime falling but incarcerations were too because crime was dramatically lower. The passage of TIS laws in the 1990s corresponds to at least 13 straight years of falling crime. But conservatives had won a battle and continued to lose the culture wars. Mark Steyn likes to say what is the point of dragging your candidate across the finish line if the cultural tides continue beating against you?

And so the Revolving Door changed from insignificant sentencing to other ways of keeping criminals on the street. 2014 was the Ferguson year and the start of BLM whoppers. Today the Revolving Door Crime Wave is due to DAs that won't prosecute, the war on police and a dozen other excuses for lax law enforcement.

Crime is simple. We have massive crime because many criminals are running free. Progressives like it that way because crime is the engine of their political power. Their ideology is that the law-abiding are bad if they are not big government Marxists, and criminals are the real victims. They are never going to take the criminals off the street and you will never have safe cities unless you fire the progressives.

Three steps to reducing crime by 90%:

1) Fire the Revolving Door Crime Wave people: DAs that won't prosecute; covid jailbreak; narcotics open borders; illegal sanctuaries; approval of political violence; 'criminals are the victims'; 'we can't afford corrections'; defund, demonize and hamstring the police; easy bail; soft on crime liberal judges; and anti Truth-In-Sentencing.

2) Back the Badge.

3) Take the criminals off the streets.

Attacking toxic progressive ideology and their endless failures to protect the public from criminals is the only way to defeat crime.

### comments

- Sixty years of progressive Revolving Door Crime Wave. Over 1,000,000 homicides nationally. Over 625,000,000 reported crimes nationally.
- USA: only western country w/ third-world crime rates, multiple times more than all other western countries.

- Progressives rode the crime wave they started to forty years control of Congress starting in 1956. Progressives rode their crime wave to massive increase in government, largesse and political power.
- Crime has been out of control in Milwaukee and across the country since the 1960s. Leftists coddle criminals because high crime is the engine of their political power.
- Corrections is 6% of the state budget.
- Democrats spend \$trillions but will not fund more prisons to protect the innocent from the crime wave they started.
- Social interventions before, during and after prison can and do co-exist with penal confinement. Republicans are not threatening to defund progressive programs.
- Leftists fought against Truth-In-Sentencing for forty years. Many still do.
- Truth-In-Sentencing is the only effective crime policy in sixty years.
- Truth-In-Sentencing proves that criminals are the root cause of crime, it cut crime in half in one decade. Crime fell so much that incarcerations started falling too.
- Milwaukee DA Chisholm dropped 6 out of 10 felony cases and even more misdemeanors last year. Less than 1 in 6 felony cases brought to him result in a conviction.
- Milwaukee courts have a two year backlog of 8000 cases meaning even more cases will be dropped. Homicide clearances have plummeted.
- Homicides have more than doubled under the 414Life Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace.
- In the 1950s Milwaukee might average about twenty homicides a year and the population was much higher, about 700,000. The Milwaukee homicide rates today are 10 to 20 times higher.
- Criminologists dream up new explanations every year. The leftists beat up Republicans every election because the case is not made that these excuses are endless.
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel is an example of the anti Truth-In-Sentencing media. MJS has gone years without admitting that tough crime policy could possibly have any effect on crime rates. In 2004 they ran a four day, front-page attack on TIS, timed so they would not have to admit incarcerations would soon be falling because crime had dropped so much.
- The poverty/economy/employment-supposed link to crime is not true. On the two graphs can be seen crime skyrocketing thru the economic roaring 1960s, falling in the early 1980s Carter/Reagan double digit unemployment years and picking up in the late 1980s Reagan boom years. In each case crime goes the opposite way that leftists claim it must.
- Judicial activism, judge shopping and tort excesses are other progressive abuses of the judicial system.
- This could be the 'Win the Culture War' message: Democrats put criminals first, they undercut the law at every turn, they will not pay for corrections to stop the crime wave they created. Their DAs do not prosecute, their cities are illegal sanctuaries, the country is flooded with narcotics thru their open borders, they demonize and hamstring the police. Democrats have cynically extorted the public for largesse, power and big government for decades, and shattered the lives of millions doing it. Republican priority number one is protecting the innocent and law-abiding.
- Running campaigns on 'I Back the Badge' only is a mistake. 1) It is weak and defensive. 2) It does not hold Democrats accountable for decades of failures and excuses. 3) It is only part of the problem. 4) Millions of leftists are bit in the butt by crime, hammering on toxic progressive ideology could shatter it for them. 5) It sets up Republicans for a fall by over-promising. Policing solves only one part of the problem. Democrats will say you failed and Democrat demands for more and bigger government are necessary. 6) Democrats can co-opt it with token gestures and claim that they 'Back the Badge' too.

Chris Kemble

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

BC480@protonmail.com

# footnotes

1. William Bennett, John DiLulio, Jr. & John Walters, *Body Count*, (Simon & Schester, 1996), and Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* (Regan Books, HarpersCollins Publishers, Inc. 1996), p. 165-6.
2. Thomas Sowell, *Vision of the Anointed* (Basic Books Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), pp. 21, 22, 24.
3. According to Morgan Reynolds, from 1960 to 1980 expected punishment of 29 days fell to 10.6%, with serious crime rising from 5.9% to 22.9% <http://www.ncpa.org/studies/s229/s229f8.gif>
4. Thomas Sowell, *Vision of the Anointed* (Basic Books Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), p. 27.
5. *World Almanac & Book of Facts 2005* (World Almanac Education Group, WRC Media Company, 2005), p.67.
6. David P. Calleo, *Bankrupting of America* (William Morrow & Co, Inc., 1992), p. 19.
7. John Hagedorn, "Getting Mugged in Electron Alley," *Wisconsin Interest*, (Winter 2002), p. 30.
8. John Diedrich, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* January 1, 2005 p.8.
9. <http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/>.
10. see chart
11. 295,000 Americans were killed in W.W.II.
12. Justice Department: <http://bjsdata.ojp.usdoj.gov/dataonline/Search/Crime/State/RunCrimeStatebyState.cfm>  
rape rate up 455% from 1961 to 1992, robbery rate up 467% from 1961 to 1991, aggravated assault rate up 516% from 1961 to 1992, property crime rate up 310% from 1960 to 1980, burglary rate up 331% from 1960 to 1980, larceny rate up 312% from 1960 to 1991, motor vehicle theft rate up 360% from 1960 to 1991
13. <http://www.ncpa.org/studies/s229/s229f8.gif>.
14. <http://bjsdata.ojp.usdoj.gov/dataonline/Search/Crime/State/StateCrime.cfm>> from 1960 to 1993. Actually up 600% from 117 to 746 per 100,000 if the lowest year of 1957 used. \FBI Uniform Crime Reports, *Crime in the United States*.
15. William Bennett, John DiLulio, Jr. & John Walters, *Body Count* (Simon & Schester, 1996), p. 87
16. 2245 homicides in 1990, under 600 by 2004: Tom Hays, Associated Press, (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*,
17. John E. Conklin, *Why Crime Rates Fell*, (Pearson Education, Inc., 2003) p. 74.
18. *Ibid.* pp. 2, 8, 77.
19. *Ibid.* p. 82.
20. *Ibid.* p. 85.
21. William Bennett, John DiLulio, Jr. & John Walters, *Body Count* (Simon & Schester, 1996), pp. 111-114.
22. In 2004-2005 \$730,091,800 (6.1%) of \$11,937,472,100: 2003-05 Wisconsin State Budget, (Legislative Fiscal Bureau), p. 50.
23. Mary Zahn, Gina Barton, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 21, 2004 p. 1A, p. 19A.
24. James Q. Wilson, *Thinking About Crime* (Basic Books, Inc., 1975), p.14.
25. Thomas Sowell, *Vision of the Anointed* (Basic Books Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), p. 28.
26. <http://www.ncpa.org/studies/s229/s229.html>.
27. Tom Hays, Associated Press, (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 11, 2004) p. 10A.
28. John Diedrich, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 1, 2005 p. 1A, p. 8A.
29. Mary Zahn and Gina Barton, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, p. 1A, November 21-24.
30. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/hmrt.htm>.
31. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search For Meaning*, (Washington Square Press, 1984), p. 86.
32. Tom Hays, Associated Press, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 11, 2004 p. 10A.