

Sunday, November 25, 2007

**"Prison Nation" broadcasts tonight.**

Too many people are unjustly caged in United States prisons. (Image from Bureau of Prisons' website). On a visit today to the National Geographic's wildlife exhibit in Washington, D.C., I happened upon an information card about tonight's airing of Prison Nation on the National Geographic Channel at 8:00 p.m. Eastern time. A National Geographic blogger listed some of the most outrageous facts about the American prison system, as follows: "The U.S. has five percent of the world's population, it has 25% of the world's inmates. California operates the third largest penal system in the world, right after China and the United States. 80,000 inmates are kept in isolation nationwide. A rising suicide rate is linked to the increasing use of solitary confinement. Nearly 70 percent of inmate suicides are in isolation. 25% of all state prison beds are occupied by the mentally ill. Tops in Los Angeles county jail, followed by New York's Rikers Island." "700,000 inmates are released from prison each year - more than two-thirds of them end up back behind bars within three years. Assaults on inmates have risen 65% in the past decade." I do not think we will achieve a fair and just criminal justice system -- including policing, prosecuting, judging, imprisoning, and releasing and supervising on probation and parole -- until people insist on and achieves a radical and positive overhaul of policing and police hiring, training, supervision, and discipline; and of the rest of the criminal justice system, including heavily decriminalizing drugs (and legalizing marijuana), eliminating mandatory minimum sentences, and eliminating criminal penalties for activities as minor as prostitution. That is my modest proposal. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Criminal Defense at 01:00