

# Over 200,000 Innocent Defendants In Houston Prisons

Well, no. The headline asserts something for which there is absolutely no basis whatsoever. I made it up out of whole cloth. Which puts me in the company of the Dallas Morning News:

In Houston alone, about 300,000 sex trafficking cases are prosecuted each year.

(Dallas Morning News [Editorial: Cracking down on sex traffickers](#)).

The number is such obvious nonsense that anyone who gave it any serious thought would decry it. ([Amy Alkon](#) and Walter Olson got there before me.) But the DMN blithely published it as fact.

This was an editorial, and people read editorials and rely on them to form their opinions. And so it would seem that there is a “sex trafficking,” which is commonly understood to mean the [sexual slavery](#), epidemic in Houston. Except the number is just as baseless as mine.

To their slight credit, the Dallas Morning News [retracted its claim](#), after people like Bennett, Alkon and Olson called bullshit. But it didn’t offer any explanation beyond the number being “inaccurate,” and therefore it deleted it from the editorial. Yet, retractions are worthless compared to the initial assertion.

Mistakes happen? Sure. But mistakes of this magnitude should never make it past fact-checking. It’s inexcusable.

On the other hand, advocates of a cause will throw whatever baseless claims against the wall they can to see what sticks. Remember the [animal rights registry folks](#)?

Ms. Beecher stated that Westchester County ranks number 9 out of 62 counties in the state for cases filed for animal abuse and this is why they are asking for animal abuser registry. She said 71% of abused or battered women report that their abuser has hurt or killed animals, 32% of battered women with children report that their children have hurt or killed animals, and 25-48% of battered women report delaying leaving their abuser for fear of their animal being abused.

She said there was a woman (not in Westchester) in a domestic violence shelter who received photos from her mother of her estranged husband cutting off her dogs ears with garden shears and he was threatening to hurt her other animals. This woman left the shelter to go rescue her animals and she has since disappeared.

Ms. Beecher continued by saying 40% of battered women report that they are forced to perform sexual acts with animals, 48% of rapists have committed acts of animal cruelty as adolescents, 30% of child molesters have committed acts of animal abuse, and 15% of active rapists also rape animals.

So someone on the Westchester County Board asked for a source for these numbers and statistics, right? Well, no. Maybe they would have if they weren't so busy wiping tears from their eyes and applauding.

The Fourth Estate serves as check and balance on government, which is why it was deemed worthy of protection in the First Amendment. Many people confuse the fact that various mainstream media don't promote their political agenda as proof of unworthiness. Whether it's the disingenuous positions taken by Fox News or the liberal pap of the New York Times, they have failed us because they take a political view of the world that doesn't confirm ours. That's a different issue.

The problem of making up "facts," like 300,000 sex trafficking cases are prosecuted each year in Houston alone, or 200,000 innocent defendants are in Houston prisons, is substantively different from reaching what we might think are the wrong conclusions from the facts. When the newspapers spout false numbers, or allow others to spout false numbers which are then repeated uncritically, they not only make every reader stupider for having done so, but create the myth that frames our perspective.

Reading a lot, as I do, and being critical of claims of "facts" by nature, as I am, the problem is both far more pervasive and far more subtle than this rather flagrant gaffe by the Dallas Morning News suggests. When I read the stories, the reporters' spin is usually obvious, much as it is in this [tweet by Ken White](#):



**AP** Associated Press AP - Tue Aug 30, 11:31 AM ET

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

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**AFP** 3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

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When the Dallas Morning News blithely tossed off the 300,000 number on a subject so serious and incendiary as sex trafficking, it was so shockingly wrong as to invite skeptics to call them out. But what if it had used the number 6,743? Surely, the number wouldn't be so shockingly out of whack as to jump off the page as nonsensical, and yet it too could have been made out of whole cloth. But you wouldn't question it and no one would ever know.

Be skeptical. It's not, as I'm regularly accused, a matter of being a hater, but a matter of concern for accuracy. Scrutinize everything, including the assertions of your friends who promote causes which you support. If your cause is as just as you think it is, the facts will back it up. If not, then the problem isn't with the facts, but with your choice of causes.

If you look, chances are pretty good that you will find pervasive nonsense masquerading as fact, both in the mainstream media as well as alternative media. Just because it's in writing doesn't make it true, and just because someone you believe says so doesn't make them right. And that applies to me, and here, as well as anywhere else. Be critical. It doesn't make you a bad person, but it may save you from being stupider.

So how many innocent people are sitting in Houston prisons? How the hell would I know?

This entry was posted in Uncategorized on November 27, 2013 [<http://blog.simplejustice.us/2013/11/27/over-200000-innocent-defendants-in-houston-prison/>] by SHG.

9 comments on "Over 200,000 Innocent Defendants In Houston Prisons"

Antonin I. Pribetic

November 27, 2013 at 9:58 am

The answer is: one is too many.

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**SHG** [Post author](#)

November 27, 2013 at 10:03 am

Yes, that is the answer. Just to a different question.

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Antonin I. Pribetic

November 27, 2013 at 3:07 pm

The question: "So how many innocent people are sitting in Houston prisons?"

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**SHG** [Post author](#)

November 27, 2013 at 3:11 pm

I bet you meant that as a [reply to this](#). Still, the answer and the question do not align. Quantitative v. qualitative. Descriptive v. normative. Pick 'em, but they still don't match, and they will continue not to match no matter what.

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Antonin I. Pribetic

November 27, 2013 at 3:36 pm

Well, the link you provided leads me back to this post. Well played, Scott. Well played.

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Fubar

November 27, 2013 at 4:07 pm

For some reason I'm still amazed by press gullibility and willingness to publicize the absurd as gospel truth. This "300,000 sex trafficking cases" canard is par for the course for anyone who recalls recent history.

"Drug Czar" William Bennett's well publicized 1988 canard of "375,000 crack babies born annually in the USA" comes to mind as a predecessor event.

Bennett simply made absurdly tendentious and unwarranted extrapolation from Dr. Ira Chasnoff's

very limited study of Chicago area hospital admissions questionnaire information to derive his crazy number.

It was entirely bogus to anyone with a brain. The press bought it, hook, line and sinker.

Dr. Chasnoff's study said nothing about "crack babies". It tallied questionnaire responses of maternity ward admitees who stated that they had used any illegal drug at least once within the past year.

On that particular occasion I actually called one of the original reporters and asked "why did you fall for this? It's absurd on its face. 375,000 is more than 10% of live births in the whole country." They were quick to inform me that a government official had stated it, so it must be the best information available.

I have heard that Dr. Chasnoff was displeased by the press support for Bennett's bloviation as well. But so what? The government official got to clang a gong to benefit himself politically, and it's hard to unclang those gongs.

Here we have the same song, umpteenth verse.

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**SHG** Post author

November 27, 2013 at 4:13 pm

The reporter's response to you tells so much. One of the (many) ongoing fights is to get the media out of its unholy marriage with government and officialdom, the symbiotic relationship that destroys the medias' integrity but gives them endless fodder to fill the gaps in pages between advertisements or commercials.

What a shame that a tool so powerful could be wasted.

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**Charlesmorrison**

November 27, 2013 at 5:08 pm

Well, we probably get the kind of fourth estate we deserve, I suppose. Many complain and continue to consume at the same time.

On another note – don't scold me just yet as this is actually related- there is a certain football star in the sunshine state that may one day be charged with a sex offense. It's a big deal in the college sports world right now. Anyway, I'm having drinks with my buddies the other day and they claim "only 3 percent of rapist ever spend a day in jail/prison." I ask, how could you possibly know this? They state that while listening to ESPN radio some female sportswriter, who had been sexually assaulted in her youth said so, and that she repeated this statistic over and over again on the world wide leaders' many platforms. 'Nuff said, I guess. But it illustrates how an unproven, illogical and absurd assertion by a member of the media can influence the public. I have no idea where this stat came from, or

how in the world anyone could possibly derive it. But it impacted my friends, who, as a whole, are not otherwise complete idiots. I know that sports journalism is the toy department of media, but can't they at least try a little bit?

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**SHG** Post author

November 27, 2013 at 5:57 pm

All manner of false rape statistics have been a mainstay of the anti-sexual assault advocates for a long time. The subject has [been discussed here](#), as well as many other places. While it is relevant, notice how nobody else tells their personal war stories here (even though, as I'm sure you can guess, everybody has their own stories, just like you)? There is a reason for that. I've asked you not to do that. Yet you continue to do so. I hope the message is getting through.

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