Drug Policy, Incarceration, and Race

1.46 million black men out of a total voting population of 10.4 million have lost their right to vote due to felony convictions.

One in three black men between the ages of 20 and 29 years old is under correctional supervision or control.

In 1986, before mandatory minimums for crack offenses became effective, the average federal drug offense sentence for blacks was 11% higher than for whites. Four years later following the implementation of harsher drug sentencing laws, the average federal drug offense sentence was 49% higher for blacks.

“Expressed in terms of percentages, 10.0% of black non-Hispanic males age 25 to 29 were in prison on December 31, 2001, compared to 2.9% of Hispanic males and about 1.2% of white males in the same age group. Although incarceration rates drop with age, the percentage of black males age 45 to 54 in prison in 2001 was still nearly 2.7% -- only slightly lower than the highest rate (2.9%) among Hispanic males (age 25-29) and more than twice the highest rate (1.3%) among white males (age 30 to 34).”

“The United States has the highest prison population rate in the world, some 700 per 100,000 of the national population, followed by Russia (665)… almost two thirds of countries (63%) have rates of 150 per 100,000 or below. (The United Kingdom’s rate of 125 per 100,000 of the national population places it at about the mid-point in the World List. Among European Union countries its rate is the second highest, after Portugal’s 130.)”

According to the US Dept. of Justice, in the United States in 2000 the incarceration rate overall was 690 inmates per 100,000 US residents. The incarceration rate for African-American women was 380 per 100,000; for African-American men, the rate was 4,848 per 100,000; the rate for Hispanic women was 119 per 100,000; for Hispanic men the rate was 1,668 per 100,000; for white women the rate was 67 per 100,000; and for white men the rate was 705 per 100,000.