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Timothy J McGinty
Cuyahoga County Prosecutor
1200 Ontario Street
Cleveland, OH 44113

Dear Mr. McGinty:

You have asked me to evaluate the impact of confinement and abuse upon the victims of Ariel Castro.

Based upon material provided by your office which included video of victim interviews, transcripts and medical reports, the FBI investigative materials, visits to the crime scene, the proffer interview of Ariel Castro, and interviews of people familiar with the case, I reach these conclusions:

1. Castro hurt each of the three young women that he captured and confined in ways that create lasting psychiatric wounds.

A. He terrified them. The body responds to terror long afterward with uncontrollable visions, smells, sounds and sensations. These are called trauma memories and they are unlike ordinary memory. They come at night in the form of nightmares. They come in the twilight zone between falling asleep and awakening. They come in the middle of the day, often when there is a reminder. Trauma survivors call this "being triggered." Each young woman sustained many, many traumas. There is some evidence of post-traumatic stress documented in medical records. Often there are delayed effects, coming on after the exhilaration of rescue wears off.

B. He degraded, demeaned and diminished them. Some acts terrify, others degrade. To be bound, gagged, deprived of a toilet - to be treated in a less than human way - causes not only fear, but a profound shame and humiliation. When this is done repetitively, relentlessly, it alters a persons sense of self. We have no official diagnosis for this, but we call it complex PTSD. It is the result of victimization over a long period of time, or in the years when personality and character are being formed, or both. Repetitive rape combined with captivity are crimes that terrify and degrade. I saw ample evidence of this.

C. He deprived them of ten years of normalcy during the stages of life when a girl becomes a woman, when we learn how to become intimate - to trust a trustworthy person. He deprived them of access to family, friends, school, work, community and country. These are profound losses and difficult to reconstruct. One may appear joyful at the return to freedom and to others who care deeply. That joy is wonderful to see and a good sign. But there is a lot of reconstructive work to be done before these survivors are really free, really able to judge who is an exploiter and who is a reliable friend.

D. He did additional damage, through beating, starving, impregnating and aborting. He fathered a child in a prison of his construction and promoted a delusion that this was a love child. He turned truth and common sense on its head and he fed that to his captives. They are in various stages of emerging from his false beliefs which he attempted to foist upon them.

E. He appeared to be evolving in an ever more dangerous direction, capturing younger and younger women, telling his captives he was hunting for replacements. And what would happen to them if he did capture new slaves? They felt, at times, that they would be replaced and freed. At some level of consciousness, they must have known that freedom was not an option and replacement meant death.

2. Each of his captives, including Jocelyn, the child, demonstrated remarkable qualities and they should inspire us all. First, there is Michelle. She suffered the longest and the most severely. But it was Michelle who served as doctor, nurse, midwife and pediatrician during the birth of Jocelyn. She breathed life into that infant when she wasn't breathing. She coached Amanda through labor and birth in primitive conditions. At other times, she interceded when Castro sought to abuse Gina, interposing herself and absorbing physical and sexual trauma. But each survivor had a will to prevail and used that will to live through the long ordeal. Amanda kept a journal with almost every entry addressed to her mother, first when her mother was alive and frantically looking for her missing daughter, Later Amanda wrote to her mother in heaven, seeking to soothe her mother as she prayed for own deliverance and the health of her little girl. On rare occasions, all four captives were allowed to be together and they managed to share faith and friendship. Home schooling and instruction in honorable values came from Amanda to Jocelyn and this was endorsed, when possible, by Gina and Michelle.

This is the good news, and it is very good, indeed. But it does not in any way paint a rosy picture for normalcy or a quick recovery. Grave damage has been done.

3. The Stockholm Syndrome does apply, in part, as an explanation for the young women's compliance with Castro. The Stockholm Syndrome is named for an infamous case in Sweden when a bank teller held hostage for less than a week became bonded to her captor who held her in a bank vault. Here's how it works. First, you are suddenly captured by a stranger who convinces you that you will be killed if you resist.

You are shocked, scared and unable to do anything without his permission. You cannot walk, talk, use a toilet, eat. But then, little by little, you are allowed "the gifts of life." You are like an infant, totally dependent on your mother for survival. As you receive these gifts of life, without consciously realizing what is occurring, you feel some warmth -- even love -- toward that giver of life. You deny (again, unconsciously) that this is the very same person who has placed your life in jeopardy. You are bonded to your slave-master. There are other elements to the Stockholm Syndrome, but that is the one that describes Castro's initial hold over Michelle, Amanda and Gina.

Additionally, they were each isolated and degraded. In those conditions, many will become psychologically enslaved. Depression can sap your will and energy. Rational calculation of risk to self and risk to others can keep a person in an abusive relationship. 2207 Seymour Street is now an infamous address. How many homes are there across America where a tyrant keeps his battered wife and sexually abused children under emotional bondage? Experts in my field know many older sisters who feared for their young sisters should they leave the tyrant's home. So they stay.

I do not have enough facts to fully explain why these captives did not attempt to escape until a decade after capture. But I know this. They came out alive. They came out when they could come out.

They acted with fortitude, courage and grace. We have reason to be proud of them and to be inspired by them.

Yours truly,

Frank M Ochberg, MD