

AN
ESSAY
FROM EZZ

"FREE TABLETS TO THE INCARCERATED"

BEING CONNECTED IN THIS DIGITAL AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CHATGPT, IT CAN SOMETIMES BE A LITTLE OVERLY COMPLICATED TO THOSE OF US ON THE INSIDE. ESPECIALLY IF YOU'VE BEEN MISSING FOR THE LAST 10 20 OR 30 YEARS. SO MUCH HAS CHANGED - TO SAY THE LEAST. WHEN THE FLORIDA DEPT OF CORRECTIONS INMATES FIRST STARTED GETTING TABLETS BACK IN 2017 THEY COST A PRETTY PENNY AND DIDN'T COME WITH MUCH INSTRUCTION. YOU BASICALLY HAD TO HAVE THE MEANS AND THE KNOW-HOW TO BUY AND OPERATE THE DAMN THING... AND IT WAS A LEARNING PROCESS EVEN THEN. WHEN A OLD-TIMER ASKED ME TO HELP HIM CREATE A EIGHT CHARACTER PASSWORD I JOKINGLY TOLD HIM TO JUST PUT IN SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARVES... WHICH HE ACTUALLY STARTED TO TYPE IN. I KNEW RIGHT THEN AND THERE THAT THE UPGRADE TO SUCH TECHNOLOGY WOULD TAKE SOME GETTING USE TO - IF YOU COULD EVEN AFFORD THE PRICY BARGAIN. THEN CAME THE COMMENCEMENT OF "FREE LOANER TABLETS" AND ALL^{THE} BROKE LOOSE. ON THE FLIP SIDE IT WAS HEAVEN FOR THOSE IN THE PRISON TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUSINESS WITH DEEP POCKETS AND SHORT ARMS. LET ME EXPLAIN SO IT MAKES CENTS.

SINCE AS EARLY AS 2016, INTERNMENT TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES LIKE GLOBAL TEL LINK, JPAY

AND SECURUS HAVE BEEN ISSUING OUT THOUSANDS OF FREE TABLETS TO COMRADES IN PRISONS IN NUMEROUS STATES... COLORADO BEING THE VERY FIRST. IT HAS THUS EXPANDED TO SUCH STATES AS FLORIDA, GEORGIA, MISSOURI, INDIANA, CONNECTICUT AND NEW YORK - AND EVEN BIRTHED NEW TELECOMMUNICATIONS PLATFORMS LIKE UNITY. COMPANIES LIKE JPAY AND SECURUS *MIND YOU, JPAY IS OWNED BY SECURUS = A CON-
GLOMERATE OF PRISON TELECOMMUNICATIONS THAT EXPOSED THE MOBILE DATA OF POTENTIAL-
LY EVERY AMERICAN TO HACKERS BACK IN 2018*, OFTEN SIGN LUCRATIVE CONTRACTS WITH ENTIRE STATE PENAL SYSTEMS AND THERE'S USUALLY NO TYPE OF INMATE LIAISON INVOLVED. PROMOTIONAL SALE PITCHES BY PROFESSIONAL SALESPEOPLE HAS MARKETED THESE FREE TABLETS AS A WAY FOR US ON THE INSIDE TO SELF-EDUCATE, PREPARE FOR REENTRY AND BETTER COMMUNICATE WITH LOVED ONES. HOWEVER THE UNDERLYING ECONOMICS BEHIND THESE "FREE TABLETS" INSINUATES A MONEY GRAB FOR EVERY GREEDY BODY WITH THEIR HAND IN THE PROVERBIAL COOKIE JAR. FROM STATE OFFICIALS TO THE DISTRIBUTORS THEMSELVES.

FOR INSTANCE THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX CAN PILFER ANYWHERE FROM 10% TO 50% OF THE MONEY GENERATED FROM EMAILS ALONE THAT BEEN SENT BY THOSE THEY INCARCERATE. SECURUS *WHICH USE TO BE CONTROLLED BY TOM GORES, THE BILLIONAIRE OWNER OF THE DETROIT

PISTONS WHO GAINED POSSESSION OF SECURUS IN NOV. 2018 FOR \$1.5 BILLION ACCORDING TO RECORDS*) HAS DISBURSED APPROXIMATELY \$1.3 BILLION IN COMMISSIONS TO THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX OVER THE PAST YEARS ... WHICH INCLUDES COMMISSIONS FROM NON-TABLET PROGRAMS LIKE PHONE CALLS. GLOBAL TEL LINK AND SECURUS TOGETHER SHARE ABOUT 85% OF THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES - NOT TO MENTION THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF PRISON TABLETS ITSELF. FEES RELATED TO MONEY TRANSFERS ALONE. FOR EXAMPLE, A \$12.99 SERVICE FEE TO TRANSFER \$100 FROM THE OUTSIDE TO SOMEONE INSIDE PRODUCED AN ESTIMATED \$99.2 MILLION IN REVENUE FOR COMPANIES LIKE JAY. ACCORDING TO THE PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE WHO RESEARCHES COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS IN PRISONS. SENDING "ONE" EMAIL TO A LOVED ONE OUT THERE COSTS US .39¢ IN HERE "TWO TIMES" THAT TO ATTACH A PICTURE, AND "FOURFOLD" FOR A VIDEO GRAM. GAMES CAN COST UPWARDS TO \$7.99 A PIECE, MOVIES \$6.99 AND INDIVIDUAL SONGS \$1.99 EACH! SOME OF THESE PRISON TELECOMMUNICATIONS OUTLETS HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF USING THAT SAME MONEY GENERATED IN EXCHANGE FOR POLITICAL FAVORS. THE MISSISSIPPI ATTORNEY GENERAL ONCE BLAMED GTL OF TRYING TO BRIBE THE STATE'S MAIN CORRECTIONS OFFICER WITH COMMISSIONS SO THAT HE WOULD CUT "MORE" PROFITABLE DEALS WITH THE COMPANY. IN THE END, GTL SETTLED FOR SOMETHING LIKE \$2.5 MILLION. GO FIGURE.

PRIVACY VIOLATIONS

ARE NOT UNFATHOMABLE EITHER. ESPECIALLY HERE IN FLORIDA. IN JUNE OF 2018, A LAWSUIT WAS FILED AGAINST SECURUS FOR RECORDING PRIVATE DIALOGUES BETWEEN INCARCERATED COMRADES AND THEIR LAWYERS... A DIRECT VIOLATION OF ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE. SOME OF THESE COMPANIES HAVE EVEN LOBBIED TO PRISON LEGISLATORS THEIR SENTIMENT THAT THE MORE AN INMATE COMMUNICATES ELECTRONICALLY - THE MORE LIKELY THEY WILL SELF-INCRIMINATE. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I DID WHEN I WROTE A EMAIL OF RESSENT DURING THE 2018 NATIONAL PRISONERS STRIKE. WHICH ULTIMATELY LANDED ME IN CLOSE MANAGEMENT SOLITARY FOR 18 MONTHS STRAIGHT. AS SHOWN, THESE PRISON TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES CAN FINESSE THEIR WAY AROUND LAWS. FOR EXAMPLE BTL RESERVES THE RIGHT TO USE INMATE DATA FOR "ANY BUSINESS OR MARKETING PURPOSE" WHILE JPAY/SECURUS EXPECTS US TO HAVE "NO EXPECTATION OF PRIVACY" BECAUSE "CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES CAN DISTRIBUTE, TRANSFER OR EVEN SELL CONTENT AND/OR RELATED INFORMATION TO OTHER PARTIES" NOTES ANOTHER ANONYMOUS SOURCE AT THE PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE.

IN RETROSPECT, I CANNOT DENY THE FACT THAT TABLETS. THE FREE TABLETS IN GENERAL. HAS DEFINITELY GIVEN US ON THE INSIDE A BETTER AND MORE CONVENIENT WAY TO CONNECT WITH THOSE ON THE OUTSIDE. IT HAS ALSO IMPROVED OVERALL COMPOUND BEHAVIOR BECAUSE NO INMATE WANTS TO LOSE THEIR BELOVED TABLET OVER A DISCIPLINARY INFRACTION THUS CREATING A MORE SAFER ENVIRONMENT FOR

BOTH STAFF AND INMATES ALIKE. BEING ABLE TO EMAIL AT YOUR HEART'S CONTENT, VIDEO CHAT AND DOWNLOAD SELECT MUSIC, GAMES, MOVIES AND T.V. SHOWS (GIVES US SOME SORT OF FREEDOM, IF YOU WILL. YET, ALL OF THE ABOVE COST MONEY, SO IT COULD BE DECEPTIVE TO CALL THEM FREE, PARTICULARLY TO LOVED ONES OF INMATES WHO TEND TO BE MUCH POORER THAN AVERAGE LAW-ABIDING FAMILIES AND STILL DISH OUT AS MUCH AS 25% OF THEIR MONTHLY INCOME FOR PHONES, CALLS, EMAILS AND DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT. MY HOPE IS THAT PRESENT AND FUTURE TELECOM-MUNICATIONS SERVICES CAN NOT ONLY CONTINUE TO CONNECT US TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD BUT DISCONTINUE THESE EXCESSIVE FEES AND HALT THE DOMINATION OF OUR DATA. AFTER ALL, FREE IS NOT REALLY FREE IN A SYSTEM THAT HAS USUALLY PROFITED OFF OF INMATE LABOR AND THEIR FAMILIES.

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