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Non-fiction

VIOLENT, NON-VIOLENT:
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

by

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In 1993, Richard Davis, a depraved repeat offender, kidnapped and killed Petaluma, California's young and promising Polly Klaas. In response the notorious Three Strikes law was hatched. A costly, overbearing measure that seems to completely neglect sex offending, yet locks up non-violent petty offenders -- for life.

In 2004, Families to Amend California's Three

Strikes proposed a ballot initiative (Prop. 66) to amend three strikes by adding stronger sanctions for sex offenders and relaxing the expensive and life-long punishments on non-violent offenders. The measure was defeated with a joint campaign effort by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the prison guards' union; the California Correctional Peace Officers Association.

In 2006, toothless laws named after their victims were signed into law by President George W. Bush and Schwarzenegger, respectively. Meagan's law created a national registry for sex offenders, and Jessica's law created a state registry for sex offenders, among some, arguably, ineffective restrictions, such as school zone limits.

Despite all the hyperbole, America's sweet little innocents continue to be the victims of voracious serial killers. And non-violent offenders continue to be vilified by an outright misleading media machine. It is the latter who are disproportionately locked up for life, costing taxpayers a needless bundle, while hordes of sex offenders are free and ignored.

Meanwhile, the state inspector general blasted the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for its failures to discover Jaycee Dugard -- held hostage in a back yard tent for eighteen years -- by

parolee Phillip Garrido; in spite of years of regular visits by parole officers. Recently the California Legislature put CDCR officials on the hot seat for failing to protect another eighteen-year-old, Chelsea King, from paroled sex offender John Gardner.

These are just a toxic hand full of California's 83,000 sex offenders at large, yet the media, politicians and law enforcement direct their focus on non-violent offenders.

As I've warned repeatedly over the years via my blog (dortellblogs.blogspot.com), at \$50,000 a year, per prisoner, and resources restrained tighter and tighter like a noose around California's neck, isn't it time we finally demand a distinction between the violent and non-violent, the rehabilitated and the hardened?

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