

Sex offenders and recidivism

In prison, sex offenders are often housed in protective custody, and for good reason. If discovered in the prison's general population by other inmates they're often targeted regardless of the steps toward rehabilitation they've taken. Oddly, this typifies the reaction of mainstream society when such as one attempts a semblance of normal life upon release.

The usual reaction — in and out of prison — is "I've got children" as a rationale for ousting or tormenting what reiterated statistics place as one of the lowest recidivism rates, between 13 and 40 percent. Oddly enough, some of these are also parents sympathizing with this over-exaggerated rationale, despite a Human Rights Watch report proving victims are usually related or known acquaintances.

All the more odd are the older sex offenders that have already forfeited a precious portion of life in prison to then return to a hysterical society. Odd because it's proven that younger offenders are likelier to re-offend than older ones. Unfortunately, there is always an element of unpredictability for re-offense in all crime categories at any age, which society is vulnerable to.

But does this, in itself, legitimize the rationale as an absolute warranting measure that will destabilize the successful reintegration of sex offenders?

Deductive logic alone validates what some experts claim will make sex offenders doubly desperate and dangerous, by making it harder for them to establish stable lives, relationships, and hold down a steady job due to ousting. Interestingly, a 2005 Gallup Poll shows people worried more about sex offenders than violent crimes or terrorism. For those concerned parents living nearby to a convicted sex offender,

"There's no data anywhere that supports claims of 60, 70, 80, 90 percent recidivism", says David D'Amora, director of the Center for the Treatment of Problem Sexual Behavior in Middletown.

If there are solutions to this problem, one of them would be to allow ex-cons wishing to prove themselves to do just that.

And for piece of mind, to calibrate concerns with statistics and reason may be the placebo affording a peaceful coexistence with neighbors and a good night's sleep.

Efrain P. Morales