

CALIFORNIA INMATES REQUEST FOR SEX-OFFENDER REHABILITATION

During the month of April 2005, other inmates and myself have been spearheading the development of a curriculum/proposal for a sex-offender awareness program. This proposed peer based program will offer a one on one setting, supported by group involvement in some prison-settings. An offender friendly environment is paramount, and voluntary based upon the fact that California Law does not mandate rehabilitation for sex-offenders that have been incarcerated in the California Department of Corrections. The program's foundation is based on a paper I wrote, entitled, "Sex/Crimes & Realities We Ignore". To understand the contents of this proposed plan, you must read the attached Sex/Crimes paper, and consider the self-inventory challenges proposed.

I am not a sex-offender, but for many reasons I am interested in their rehabilitation. For one, I have family, friends, and a genuine concern for the safety of our society, and the avoidance of predictable victimization. Furthermore, I believe that not providing treatment to a group of people that has such a high recidivism rate is illogical and in a moral sense, unconscionable.

Not to mention, that as a prisoner with a life sentence who has seen a number of laws passed, increasing criminal penalties based on crimes involving sex-offenses, such as, "Three Strikes", etc.; which I and other's who are not convicted of sex-crimes are subtly subjected to due to the "get tough on crime" atmosphere fostered by such acts. I find it offensive that California Officials campaign for harsher laws when in fact there are no attempts to rehabilitate the offender. Such rehabilitation increases the probability that the offender will not re-offend, which helps provide a much safer and healthier environment for all. And, since it is obvious that the current systems are not working, (if so new legislation would not continuously be necessary), then please consider the following:

Outline of Program

- o Have weekly meetings.
- o Meetings to be administered by other I/M's, in a peer setting.
- o Curriculum will encourage I/M's to be honest about what their sexual appetites entail. This will be done in a non-judgmental setting. We will walk them through how their desires have hurt them and the community, (Victims, etc.), will encourage them to not reoffend by suggesting noncriminal ways of sexual expression; sex being a natural/biological driven act which will find an outlet when not addressed. (Sex/Crimes-paper attached will aid you in understanding this principle.)
- o That a core group of inmate peer mentors be trained through the program in order to spread it to other prison-yards.

This program is totally inmate friendly; it will be non-judgmental, making the inmate feel comfortable talking about the REALITIES of their sexual desires. The sexual desires in question are criminal and repulsive to many, but just because that is so that does not mean that the person convicted did not have those thoughts in the first place, and or will just cease having them because other's do not agree with their sexual desires.

The bottom-line objective of the program is to prevent the criminal acts of sex-crimes. The peer-on peer base is to walk the inmate through his/her act so that s/he might in fact identify a moral basis for not committing the act, but even if the moralistic view-point can not be reached, they will be encouraged in the least to not commit the act due to the adverse consequences they will face.

I realize that this approach will offend many senses of those in the psychological/penological fields, but the reality is this; (*Current system not working*).

1. California law does not mandate that sex-offenders be rehabilitated; the law is that they be punished.
2. Despite the reform/rehabilitation package currently being negotiated/implemented, that still will not be a mandatory program for Inmates sentenced under punishment, not rehabilitation. Moreover, the reform program does not change the statute concerning punishment, so the reforms as far as prisoner-participation is concerned are optional, not mandatory.
3. Even if the law changed today, making it mandatory that sex-offenders be rehabilitated before their release, that law would not be applied to the thousands of currently incarcerated inmates because the law could not be retroactively applied.
4. If somehow the program could be made to be mandatory, I feel that it would be the same as prison being mandatory; not-productive to the overall objective of actually stopping crime and instead just coming up

with a another paper (law) tiger. Ask yourself this; what inmate convicted of a sex-crime would not be able to predict what the mandatory facilitator wanted to hear? Therefore, what the inmate would do is tell the facilitator exactly what they want to hear in order to get through the program. This would enable the inmate to avoid being upfront about what is really going on with them. You can see how a realistic approach would not be possible with this scenario.

5. Mental Health involvement at this point is counterproductive. For one it is difficult enough for a sex-offender to want to talk about their crimes. So, to have their only option being to discuss it with a mental health professional, or in a mental health setting is difficult to foresee if the person does not feel that they have a mental health issue; and despite the psycho-labeling, most inmates I have talked to do not feel like they have mental-health issues.

In utopia everything will be all right, people will be told that a law/rule exists, that they should not do it, that it is immoral and they then will immediately follow the rules. Since we do not live in utopia and California currently has no plan to realistically address these issues, then it is my proposal that we try something new.

This program is not conducive to any existing programs in any California prisons, such as Criminal & Gangs Anonymous, (CGA), etc. CGA's theme is gang-related; most sex-offenders are not gang-members. CGA and other programs have a general moralistic, (sometime theological), based program, which is not this programs foundation.

While it is a hope that a person might find a moral reasoning to not re-offend and this will be explored on an individual basis when mentored, they will not be peer-pressured in that area. In adopting one moral view over another, we run the risk of alienating some and or getting into areas not conducive to stopping crime and only encouraging debate on cultural/moralistic views on the subject of sex. As mentioned earlier the bottom-line is to prevent re-offense, and if in the end all that can convince some in this non- mandated setting is an internalization of the penal effect, then that is acceptable.

These ideas in regards to how to facilitate a successful group is based on research I have done when talking to people actually convicted of sex crimes. Talking to them in an honest setting where they did not feel that all I wanted to hear was that they would not re-offend and or feeling like I personally took issue with their crimes. This proposal is also cost-effective, it will be inmate-ran and the overall savings if it works is astronomical.

The group setting will not be appropriate for every prison, due to the predictable hostility/violence offenders will face from prison-staff and inmates alike. What I would like to see happen is that the one-on-one mentoring program be (secretly) facilitated in settings where group meetings are not an option. In some prisons, neither group nor mentoring will be appropriate, in those cases I would like to see offenders upon their release referred to programs in the communities, which follow the themes aforementioned. I am currently seeking through this and other means assistance from groups or persons interested in getting programs started in prisons, and setting up after-care programs for inmates upon their release.

Again, acting as if this will just go away is not a reality; and as mentioned in Sex/Crimes, we all have sexual-desires (secrets) which we find outlets for, so lets quit pretending that people convicted of sex-crimes will just curb those appetites because those appetites are outlawed.

In approaching Inmates whom, like myself, are not convicted of a sex-crime; most initially have been repulsed with the idea of realistically addressing these issues, taking on a societal view to witch-hunt them all. That is until they are confronted/challenged with the realities addressed in Sex/Crimes, doing their own sexual-inventory; they are then further enlightened when asked to consider how Politicians are quick to exploit horrendous sex-crimes in order to increase all criminal-penalties and catapult personal careers. In the end, Society, you, the tax-payer are the ultimate victim of this unrealistic approach to addressing sex-crimes, your wallet (taxes) are being seized, your senses are assaulted through the news of these crimes, and your personal safety is constantly in worry based on the scare tactics needed to keep you in fear. If a realistic approach to these issues is embraced, we can quit existing through fear, and start living/evolving through reality. To any direct or indirect victim of a sex-crime, my heart goes out with you; it is my intention to stop these crimes.

If you would like to assist with this or just have a comment/suggestion, you can write me directly at the below address, or you can e-mail me, e-mail correspondence sent to me bi-weekly. To any computer gurus, I am interested in setting up an authorized, web site, with this material in order to compile data on this subject to support possible future inmate legal filings requesting rehabilitation along these lines.

La Merle R. Johnson, J-92682
POB 409060, C15-208L
lone, CA 95640-9000

e-mail: lamerlej@yahoo.com