

No evidence registries increase public safety

written by NARSOL | June 18, 2016

By Noah Berlatsky . . . “He is a lifetime sex registrant. That doesn’t expire. Just like what he did to me doesn’t expire, doesn’t just go away after a set number of years.” In a [statement](#) released to BuzzFeed, the victim of rapist Brock Turner found a small sliver of justice in the fact that Turner, a former Stanford student, would have to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life, just as she would have to live with the effects of the assault for the rest of hers.

Turner was only sentenced to six months in jail; the leniency of the sentence has led to an effort to [recall the judge](#). Being placed on a list seems like a small punishment in comparison to a prison term. But sex offender registries were never meant to be a punishment—and since they were introduced in the mid-1990s, they have proven to be both ineffective and often unjust.

The original goal of registries was not to provide restitution, but to protect communities. Reading the victim’s statement, it’s easy to see why sex offender registries seem like a reasonable and necessary response to crimes like Turner’s. Following a party, Turner dragged the victim behind a dumpster and penetrated her with his fingers. He was only stopped when two Swedish students physically chased him away, and then captured him. In response to his conviction, he has [blamed a culture of drinking and partying on campus](#), rather than taking responsibility for his own violence.

Given the horrific nature of his actions, and his effort to shift blame, some might argue there’s a risk he could victimize others. Placing him on the sex offender registry, in theory, should warn communities of a potential threat. As one

[recent pro-registry editorial](#) argued, “the rights of the victims, and the protection thereof, outweigh any perceived infringement of the rights of the criminals.”

The truth, though, is that there’s very little evidence that sex offender registries increase safety in any material way. A 2014 study conducted by Purdue University economics professor Jillian B. Carr of people on the North Carolina sex offender registry found that being on the registry had [no effect on recidivism](#). That’s consistent with a [2007 report by Human Rights Watch](#), which looked at various studies and concluded that sex offender registries did little to prevent sexual violence. (Read the rest of the article online at [Quartz](#))