

# America's game: Eternal recrimination and shame

written by Sandy | June 12, 2017



By Sandy...*part 2 of a 3-part series...*

In a recent book club discussion group, as a preface to our next assigned selection, the leader read Zechariah 9:16 and opened a discussion about how every human life has value and is seen by its creator as a precious jewel and a treasure. The discussion continued as he challenged us to think of how we tended to view the homeless begging on street corners or a man lying drunk in a doorway. He reminded us that even those lives have value and are not to be despised.

Even those who do not appreciate the Biblical reference will have no trouble relating this to the recent comment made in an op-ed written by John Canzano about Luke Heimlich, the standout college baseball pitcher recently “outed” as being on the sex offender registry. In his diatribe against Heimlich, Canzano opens with reminding us of the victim and says that she matters and, in fact, matters more than Luke.

This is the elitist view that has led us to a set of assumptions used to justify the harshest of treatments against those we find morally inferior to ourselves. It is the view that makes it difficult to see the life of a homeless beggar being as valuable as your own. It is the view that has led us

to make assumptions about victims that are destructive to their recovery.

“She is ruined forever.” “Her life will never be the same.” “She will never get over this.” Therapists and legitimate victim service providers know this is the opposite of what victims need to hear, but the all-knowing public persists in that belief. Once that belief is accepted, it logically follows that the person who caused the destruction of that life must have his own destroyed. Therefore, nothing that can be done to bring him grief and shame and ostracism is too extreme.

And thus we have a registry that says to the world that those on it have ruined the lives of others and deserve to have their own ruined, and no punishment, consequence, or restriction heaped on the perpetrator is enough to repay the victim for what she has lost.

This works well for revenge. It doesn't work at all for the well being of society.

With the proper help and sometime with no help but their own inner strength, victims can and do move past their pain, just as we all move past pain and excruciating loss and horrific tragedy.

Those who caused the pain can and do move past what motivated them to act as they did. If society is to benefit, it must do all it can to expedite this. The registry and its subsequent restrictions do the opposite. They keep former offenders from moving past where they were and going forward.

Because Luke was a juvenile when he committed his crime, and because the state he was registered in does not make public the offenders like Luke who are assessed as a very low risk to re-offend, he was doing what benefits society. He was moving forward. He was earning his place in a society that was giving him a second chance.

Now that all hangs in the balance, and, as Mr. Canzano correctly says, public opinion is divided. The outcome and Luke's future are unsure, but one thing is sure.

The young victim, by all accounts, was moving past her pain to the future, but that has been derailed as well with this dredging up of her past. It is difficult to see how she is being well served.

There is no evidence whatsoever that Luke was doing anything but living a law-abiding, productive life with a bright future. There is no reason whatsoever to believe he would ever re-offend. It is very difficult to see how this revelation will benefit anything or anyone.

Yes, victims matter. Those who commit crimes matter. And encouraging and enabling both to be the best they can be matters. Why do we do the opposite?