

What is anti-registry activism?

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By Derek W. Logue of OnceFallen.com . . . I have been an activist fighting so-called “sex offender laws” for over a decade; however, I’ve come to the realization a long time ago that most folks do not even know what I mean by “anti-registry activism.” This piece has been long overdue, but I’m going to explain just what anti-registry activist does and what an anti-registry activist DOES NOT do. This ISN’T a message to those within the movement to “reform” the registry but to outsiders looking in.

First, consider about what Anti-Registry advocates DO NOT do.

The most important point to make is that we aren’t out to “normalize pedophilia” or are “pro-pedophile” in the context used and misused by the American public. To the untrained American eye, these two terms have often come to mean everything that rejects the notion that anyone convicted of a sex crime should be tortured and killed. This is because they think the terms “sex offender” and “pedophile” are

interchangeable and many folks still believe everyone on the registry molested a bazillion kids and will not stop until they are tortured and killed (and possible prison raped). And no, that's not exaggeration or embellishment; just go to any comment section on a registry related story as evidence. To the Anti-Registry Movement, these terms specifically mean those who would advocate for the abolishment of Age of Consent laws. That is not something we strive to do, as we shall explain our reasons in the next paragraph.

The Anti-Registry Movement DOES NOT advocate sexual abuse. Many of those who aren't a part of our efforts or who identify online as non-offending pedophiles will state they recognize that sexual abuse and rape harms victims. Yes, there are people who identify as "pedophiles" and recognize it is not okay to act on their attractions. [See Virtuous Pedophiles as an example.] You can be a pedophile without being a registered sex offender in the same way you can be a registered sex offender without being a pedophile. Pedophile is a clinical term while sex offender is a legal term. You cannot be CONVICTED (legal term) for PEDOPHILIA (clinical term). Understanding the difference is key to understanding the difference between advocating repeal of the registry and advocating age of consent laws. I support those who don't have a desire to reoffend, or in the case of the non-offending pedophile, the desire to never offend in the first place. One deficiency people engage in is thinking opposing one thing means you advocate for something else (A=B). But advocating against a public shaming registry is NOT the same as advocating for more child abuse, so A is unequal to B. If one were to say, "I oppose cutting off the hands of those who steal," but state they should be punished under the proper context of American jurisprudence, we wouldn't claim that person advocates stealing, would we? (Well, most rational people, I mean.)

The Anti-Registry Movement DOES advocate for fair treatment of

those convicted of sex crimes. What do we mean by that? That does not mean absolving someone of wrongdoing; we believe that the justice system has a punishment system in place for a reason. However, punishment should be tempered with fair treatment. Those who committed sex crimes often did so because of poor choices, and these poor choices can be addressed by a variety of treatment methods, such as the Good Lives Model, Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), and other positive support groups willing to hold people accountable the right way. Most people who committed sex offenses are "situational offenders," and most respond positively to treatment because most recognize they engaged in harmful behavior. That's why reoffense rates are low. We also support groups like Stop It Now, the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center (Gundersen), and Safer Society Press, who promote treatment of victims and abuse prevention without using their organizations as platforms for advocating registries and other harmful laws.

It is important to understand the meaning of PUNISHMENT before I get to the next point. Traditionally, incarceration, probation/ parole/ supervised release, and fines are forms of sanctions we call "punishment," or perhaps you prefer the term "punitive." Now, do you think the sex offender registry is a form of punishment/ punitive sanctions? If so, I agree with you and I thank you for proving the United States Supreme Court wrong! In 2003, the Court ruled in *Smith v Doe* the registry was not "punitive" (punishment) but regulatory in nature. As John Roberts, then chief attorney for the State in the case, the registry was "no more intrusive than applying for a Price Club [Costco] Membership." But we all know better. It feels like punishment. You can't be arrested for not paying Costco fees, living too close to a Costco, or failing to update your Costco membership, nor does Costco keep an online membership registry. We all know the Sex Offender Registry, community notification, residency restrictions, fees, and other related sanctions are forms of punishment. But the state insists they aren't punishment, for now at least. This brings

me to the main point:

The Anti-Registry Movement believes PUNISHMENT should remain within the confines of the traditional justice system paradigms of incarceration, probation/ parole/ supervised release and treatment. This means we oppose the registry, community notification, residency restrictions, fees, GPS, and so on. Prison is not a nice place, and oftentimes, it offers no support to those soon to be released. Often, the newly released get a few bucks and a bus ticket to the county of conviction. But then the next wave of punishment begins in the form of these post-release sanctions. These sanctions have one goal in mind— to trap as many registrants as possible back in the net of the “justice” system. In addition, we are ostracized, face discrimination, and even are attacked by those who hate everyone on the registry. Those who harass or attack us are rarely punished because many feel it is justified. That is a primary reason for opposing these sanctions. I am of the belief that if a person has an end of sentence date, then it should really mean end of sentence. There should not be any post-release sanctions once your incarceration/ supervision period is up. Our system isn't perfect, and these laws were passed due to rare, high profile cases. Most who will live under these laws didn't commit the kinds of acts that inspired them. Honestly, they do not stop crimes anyway, which brings me to the next important point...

Finally, the Anti-Registry Movement believes that prevention efforts should be based upon a foundation of facts and evidence. To be put in a simplistic terms, we demand proof of effectiveness to justify any program's existence. We used to believe crazy things like “pray the gay away” or “if I strap myself to a machine that shakes my belly, I'll lose weight.” We learned over time these techniques did not work. We thought if only we discriminated against people enough, we could force them to stop adhering to whatever beliefs they had that we disliked, and that system was just as faulty when the ancient

Romans fed the Christians to the lions. After all, it worked so well that Christianity isn't a major religion with two billion or so adherents, right? The sex offender registry and other post-release sanctions have never been proven to work; in fact, there is evidence that they decrease public safety and make things worse in general.

Dehumanizing registered persons won't discourage those struggling with impure thoughts and feelings. The help I offer a registered citizen involves helping them understand the SOR and various laws in which they live by under duress (and if you think these rules are simple, try reading them sometime), helping them find jobs and housing, listening to their stories, giving them the best advice I can offer as a fellow registrant, and referring them to anyone I feel can best serve them. Doing this doesn't mean I absolve them from whatever they have done, but IT IS NOT MY PLACE to judge those who contact me for services. This separates me from some people and groups seeking to merely "reform" the registry, some of whom only advocate for specific groups or even just one person. I don't care if you are an R&J (for outsiders, that's activist lingo for cases of teens landing on the registry for consensual relations with other teens) or the so-called "Pillowcase Rapist," I want you to not only be offense-free upon your release, I want to to have a chance to become a productive member of society. As much as some of you outside the ARM hate registrants and wish they could all be in prison, raped, mutilated and murdered, we don't do those things, so many of those convicted of sex offenses WILL be released. The question is, would you rather they work, pay taxes, have a stable location and a support network, all of which are known to reduce the likelihood of recidivism, or you want to continue to reject all these things and increase the likelihood of recidivism. I prefer every registrant succeeds because every success means no more victims.

That's a lot to digest, but for those who just want the cliff

notes version, here's the shorthand version. I can't make it any simpler than this, folks.

“The Anti-Registry Movement does not promote sexual abuse of any kind; we do, however, support positive treatment and support for those who offended so that they may live productive and offense free lives. We support evidence-based methods of prevention, education and treatment. We believe the public registry, residency restrictions, community notification, registry fees, GPS monitoring, and other post-release sanctions are NOT evidence-based and are ineffective as methods to achieving an offense-free society. Thus, we will publicly oppose these oppressive sanctions until these sanctions are fully abolished.”