

What will it take for media to show integrity in reporting about sexual crime?

written by Sandy | August 27, 2021



By Sandy . . . We are used to law enforcement, district attorneys, legislators, and even judges making statements that amount to lies. In an opinion he wrote, a [Colorado justice said](#), “Study after study has shown that sex offenders have one of the highest likelihoods of reoffending once they are released from custody.” There is no “study after study” that shows this; [every credible study](#) done shows the exact opposite.

Using the same false narrative, Orange County, CA, District Attorney Todd Spitzer, angry over the release of inmates due to the Covid-19 pandemic, [criticized the release](#) of those with prior sexual convictions, saying, “We do not want these people out on the streets because we all know registered sex offenders have the highest propensity to commit additional offenses.” Compounding either his inability to know the truth or his willingness to deliberately obfuscate it, [Spitzer](#)

[additionally said](#), “I’m here to tell you: sex offenders cannot be rehabilitated . . .”

Those entities all exist to mete out justice, or what is perceived as justice, to those who are charged with having broken a law. Granted, we should be able to expect only the truth from them, but at least, in falsifying or exaggerating what they say, they are acting in favor of a bias that everyone understands they hold.

Not so the media. Honest public media holds no bias in reporting the news. They give the facts and let the facts tell the story. Anything beyond that is editorializing, not news reporting, and a survey of today’s media is very hard pressed to find any reports on the subject of persons accused of committing sexual crime that are free of bias.

In California, the struggle to pass SB145, which was from first word to last an anti-discrimination bill, [was portrayed by media outlets](#) as a bill that would open the floodgates to allowing adults to engage in sexual activity with minors with total impunity. “Governor Newsom Signs Bill Giving Sex Predators Easier Access to Young Teens” was one header while another claimed, “California Democrats introduce bill to protect pedophiles who lure and sexually abuse innocent children.”

Even NPR – National Public Radio – [is not exempt from using this despicable practice](#). For a piece they did about those on the registry who had “gone off the grid,” they conducted interviews with two esteemed researchers, Kelly Socia and Alissa Ackerman, who each spoke at great length about why the registry is a failure. NPR used a total of four short sentences from Socia and two from Ackerman, sentences that, within the context of the article, appear to lend support to NPR’s stance that the reason the registry doesn’t work is that too many who are registered are out of compliance. Both researchers lodged complaints with NPR.

Jeremy Rose is a registrant who lives with his family in Utah, until early August, 2021, in the small town of Tremonton. Mr. Rose is a skilled craftsman who has over the years, going back to before his conviction, done volunteer work for the school in the way of building sets and props for the drama department and the color guard. He and his wife of twenty-one years, Julie, have four children ranging in age from eight to twenty, and the Roses are very involved parents.

After his conviction, while on probation, Jeremy was able to continue this with a safety plan. Almost all of the work was done in his shop, and for the rare times when he had to be or work on school property, he always had one or more supervising adults with him and went late in the evening when students were not present. There has been no accusation or even hint of impropriety from any student or parent regarding his behavior.

Nevertheless, an issue was raised by a disgruntled parent in early 2021. Three of Jeremy and Julie's four children were in a school play; their seventeen-year-old daughter was the lead. Part of the set, a "tree" that she had to climb, had to be constructed on the stage, requiring him to be in the school. Even though no longer on probation, Jeremy still followed his original safety plan, but the disgruntled parent still made it an issue in the community.

Enter [KSTU-FOX 13 in Salt Lake City](#). A reporter from there approached Jeremy and offered him the opportunity to tell his side of the issue, to "set the record straight." After much discussion, Jeremy and Julie and their children decided he should do it.

The interview lasted a little over two hours. The Roses felt that it went well and were pleased.

Reality flattened them when the piece aired. Eight minutes in total, Jeremy is seen on screen and shown talking possibly a total of a minute. His two-hour interview was edited into

fragments and sound-bites that show him in an extremely negative light.

Community reaction was divided; many rallied around the Roses with love and support; others did not. The effect on the Rose children was devastating. The harassment the family received caused the children to suffer unbearable anxiety. In early August they moved, and the children are due to start a new school.

And now KSTU-FOX 13 has done a "follow-up" story, which primarily consists of castigating local law enforcement for not bringing charges against Jeremy. They used some of the same negative sound-bites from their original hit piece.

And what of the Rose children? On top of the stress and anxiety of starting a new school, they are faced with this type of publicity and the fear of wondering if the harassment will start here, in their new home, in their new school.

The sex offender registry and all it has spawned are intended to protect children. There is no evidence it has ever protected anyone, but it has made victims of many, the Rose children among them.

But Fox News in Salt Lake City, Utah, has the ratings spike they desired, and media lives or dies by their ratings, and ratings are driven by sensationalism. Is there a solution? Not while our media is subject to its current financial structure, which is dependent on – you guessed it – ratings, which depend on sensationalism, which often depends on throwing people, including children, to the wolves.