



CSOR

*Though I have fallen,
I will rise. - Micah 7:8*

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Victims forever? Maybe not!

I was pleased to see, in a regular report from our church's Missions Pastor, that there might be opportunity for a more comfortable open door between those of us who advocate for men and women who have sexually offended and those who have been victimized. It was an amazing thing to see and opened my eyes to a possible new way to develop an open dialogue.

The Executive Director of The Denver Street School, which started as a ministry of Bear Valley Church a number of years ago, shared a fascinating and heartening story regarding young street women in their street school program who had been sexually victimized. For years, these girls were protected at school as they attended a specialized Hope School Program which functioned separately from the normal street school educational option.

The school's Executive Director shared a report, that after keeping the schools separate for many years, it was made clear to school leadership that the girls who had been schooled separately in a "safe zone" because they were victims of sexual abuse, did not want to remain victims for the rest of their lives. They wanted to be in a normal program for kids that wanted to be normal. They did not want to be overly protected or assumed to be any less capable of displaying normality than anyone else.

In Colorado, we are constantly reminded by victim advocates, D.A.'s and prosecutors that those victimized will be victims forever. In one sense, they may be correct. They were literally victimized at least one time in their lives. However, the question becomes, do they have to feel as if they are victims forever? This story from the Denver Street School is an almost perfect example of the reality that not all those victimized remain or wish to remain victims for their whole lives. Very soon, the Hope School section of the Denver Street School will join with the Denver Street School proper at the request of those girls who were sexually offended against.

While it is impossible to do a prediction at the start of such a change, as to whether it will turn out the way that the original Hope School girls/young women believed it would, we can definitely wait and see how this experiment at Denver Street School works out as the two programs combine and see what happens down the road. Wouldn't it be wonderful if this experiment opened a door for meaningful dialogue between those of us who advocate for registrants and those that they offended against?!

One change in our state that would greatly assist in encouraging more positive outcomes for those who may at some point be victimized, would be the transfer of money now utilized for overly extensive treatment for men and women with a sexual offense in their background, to the area of prevention of present and future sexual offenses. Shortening treatment requirements to reflect a time period more in tune with other U.S. States would save Colorado a huge amount of money that could then be focused on issues of prevention in our state, as well as on the healing that we know can take place for those already victimized!

Termination From Treatment: Overdone?

Treatment providers, parole officers and probation officers have a great deal of power. Since the criminal justice system has a massive amount of power over those with a variety of criminal offenses, it is not hard to also see that the power of the overall system permeates to those who have power and control over our men and women who have committed sexual offenses.

Power is an interesting entity. If it is used appropriately to support positive changes in the lives of those who have offended, it can be a good thing. If it used aggressively and in an overbearing manner, it is not a good thing. In spite of changes in the Sex Offender Management Board's Standards and Guidelines, changes in Parole Administrative Regulations and Colorado Department of Corrections Administrative Regulations, there are still significant areas where change in the way power is demonstrated and delivered is not, in this writer's opinion, enough.

Since I do not have a lot of solid information on how decisions are made inside the Colorado Department of Correction in terms of terminating registrants from treatment, I will stick with terminations that take place in the community, both terminations from treatment, and sometimes terminations from parole and probation. Terminations from parole and probation frequently result in a first or a return trip to prison.

I attend a significant number of revocation hearings as part of my job at CSOR. This is because men and women who have been revoked ask me to attend their revocation hearings and to testify on their behalf. Since many who are asked to leave treatment on the outside are considered "not amenable to treatment", we often see people being expelled from several treatment programs as people seek to find one that will work with them. This sometimes but not always, results in a return to prison. It is not clear to me exactly what "not amenable to treatment" means, but it ends up looking like a variety of different things in the eyes of the current treatment provider company. A clear definition for "not amenable to treatment is desired in my opinion.

Take for example, a man who had a photo album of pictures allowed inside DOC, who brought them to the outside, the album containing pictures of women who were dressed in attractive but frequently somewhat scanty clothing. These pictures are allowed on the inside of the Colorado Department of Corrections for some individuals and with certain parameters. On a routine parole visit to the residence where this person was living, the photo album was discovered, and taken from him. He had been doing well in treatment at this particular treatment program, but when that book (again, allowed inside DOC) was discovered at his place of habitation, he was moved from "normal" treatment at this particular treatment facility to a "high risk" treatment group out of the same treatment company. When introducing himself to this new "high risk" group, he mentioned that he was wanting to go home to his home state, as he had not seen his family in 20 years. With that the "high risk" treatment provider told him he was "out of there", and he was terminated from that treatment program. The question also comes to mind – did the therapists inside the Colorado Department of Corrections tell men leaving the prison with that picture book which was allowed inside, that it would not be accepted by treatment programs on the outside, and they should thus get rid of it before starting treatment in the community? If the purpose of

allowing the book on the inside was that men inside had no outlet for their sexual desires, would therapists on the outside agree with that, and not terminate them from treatment if and when it was discovered? The answer is obviously no!

When talking recently with therapists about the “high risk group” designation because of a photo album allowed inside the Sex Offense Treatment and Monitoring Program inside the Department of Corrections, one of the therapists indicated that having such a book “objectified women”. She may be right in some instances.

While I personally do not totally understand the Colorado Department of Corrections’ (CDOC) decision to allow this kind of portfolio inside the prison, it is even harder for me to understand why the therapists inside would not make sure the person knew that they needed to discard it before leaving prison or as soon as they got out, so that they would not get into any trouble when officers or treatment providers found out about it. It is only a matter of time that this would be found out during a parole visit.

Treatment providers have a lot of leeway regarding termination from their treatment programs. Parole and probation officers have a huge amount of power as well. Recently a man with brain injury issues was terminated from all three treatment programs to which he had been sent. Problems frequently apparent in the brain injury population made it difficult for this man to make it “be successful in treatment. He talked too much and didn’t listen enough; he didn’t always make the best decisions, although he never committed another sexual offense. After termination from three treatment programs, he was finally sent to the Parole Board where they considered whether to send him back to prison or not. I was present at the hearing at the request of both this client and his attorney. Because of his challenges with group settings, his attorney and I suggested that he do treatment for a while with just one therapist and no group. This had worked before on behalf of a woman with brain injury issues who was on her way back to prison. The Parole Board Member looking at this situation listened carefully to the attorney’s argument on behalf of the client and told us that he would need a few hours to make a decision regarding this man staying in the community or going back to prison. To be sure, a few hours later, we had an answer.

This client is being allowed to stay in the community, and to see an individual therapist for a while, to see if the work that they could do together would make a difference for him in terms of being able to return to group at some point in time. The Parole Board Member stated that the treatment programs he had attended had not appropriately met his treatment needs.

I believe that treatment is important. I also believe that it is too long in Colorado. No amount of treatment will guarantee that a person will never commit another offense. In fact, too much treatment can be just as detrimental as not having treatment at all. A shortened version of treatment in Colorado would, in my humble opinion, make treatment compliance easier and ultimately more successful. Treatment providers believe in what they are doing, but Standards and Guidelines that are too prescriptive in Colorado make it hard to “let go” of people and allow them to restart their lives.

Illusions Regarding Super-Humanity

Lately, I have received letters from a few men expressing their concern and sometimes disdain that I have forgotten to do something I had said that I would do for them. Of course, any time this happens, I have to take another look at my ongoing ability or lack thereof to keep doing the work that I have been doing on your behalf for around 20 years now. I started working with our group of men and women when my son committed a sexual offense many years ago – before that happened, I was totally unaware of the subject because it had never touched me before. I have worked extremely hard for a very long time, starting in my mid-fifties up until now when I will turn 75 August 23rd. While I am still in reasonably good health, I am definitely feeling the effects of aging.

In light of that fact, I have a few things I would like to remind all of you about. Please try to remember to follow these guidelines as we work together. IF you are not able to follow the guidelines, you should probably find someone else to write to! I say this with affection for all of you, but knowing I cannot continue at the pace I have kept for the past 20 years. I need your patience and understanding.

- 1) Please keep your letters to two pages. I sadly do not have time to read anything over that. Along with that request, please use a pen or pencil (type if you have access to a typewriter which I know many of you don't) and write as legibly as you can. Very small writing and light writing is almost impossible for me to read and decipher. I have asked for this before, but many of you continue to write "novels" in extremely small, light print. I know that learning challenges can interfere with writing skills for some men, and I do understand that!
- 2) Do NOT send me manila envelopes full of legal materials. As I have stated many times, I am not an attorney, a paralegal or anything even close to that. While I appreciate your efforts to approach the courts with what you believe is crucial and important information, there is nothing that I can do to assist with that. Unfortunately, because of the volume of letters in regular envelopes, I am not able to read the manila folders full of materials. I also do not have the time to send items back to you as you may have requested.
- 3) If you want to give me information regarding your offense, do it in a short, bulleted segment. I would love to hear all of your stories but just can't do it by reading 6 – 12 pages.
- 4) Do not chastise me for not getting to your issues fast enough, or for missing something I "promised" you I would do. I always have every good intention of calling everyone back who calls me, of sending out things I stated I would send etc. The reality of my days and hours is that between the phone, the e-mails, the texts and the letters, as well as the revocation hearings, court visits, helping people move into housing who are now out of prison or have our offense but are in the community, etc. it is impossible not to forget something occasionally. While I make notes in notebooks as every call or thing to do comes in, I seldom have time to review them.
- 5) I cannot act as a POA for you. The banks will not accept any checks you send me IF you do not include a legitimate I.D. such as a driver's license or prison I.D. The only checks I can accept are checks that are made out to CSOR.

Life is short! That includes mine. I love working with all of you, but need your assistance and support, and yes patience, as I try to help you move forward. I want to help you through prison and to the outside as quickly as possible. However, I am not GOD by a longshot.

"Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day. You shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

NARSOL Conference

October 8 – 10, 2021

Several of us from Colorado will be attending the NARSOL Conference in Houston, Texas during October. Featured speakers are:

- Dr. Jill Levenson from Barry University in Miami. Dr. Levenson is presenting on “Effective Advocacy Through Messaging and Framing.”
 - Dr. Emily Horowitz from St. Francis College in Brooklyn. Dr. Horowitz is presenting on “Challenging Sex Offense Laws and Policies During Amplified Panics.”
 - David Singleton is an Attorney and Law Professor at Northern Kentucky University, and Executive Director of Ohio Policy and Research Center. He is presenting on “Using Interest-convergence Theory to Reform Oppressive Sexual Offense Laws.”
 - Paul Dubbeling – Civil Rights Attorney specializing in sexual offense registry litigation. NARSOL General Counsel. “Litigation, Education, Legislation: An Integrated Strategy for Reform”
 - Mary Sue Molnar – Registry Reform Advocate and Executive Director of Texas Voices for Reason and Justice. Mary Sue will be the Awards Banquet Speaker.
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In addition to these special presenters, this particular NARSOL Conference is also a “learning event.” A number of NARSOL Members/ Advocates will also be sharing during breakout training sessions with attendees at the Conference who are interested in learning more about specific topics. It is my privilege to be presenting on housing issues that exist here in the State of Colorado for our men and women registrants. We will be paying specific attention to housing resources and lack thereof, how to open new housing doors, working with the Department of Corrections/case managers to resolve housing issues, special challenges in housing for those with a Sexually Violent Predator designation and many other issues. Thanks to Tami Floyd and Rick Ostring who will be assisting me with the PowerPoint Presentation on this topic. As usual, they are stepping up to the plate to support the work of CSOR in areas where I am not particularly gifted (like putting together power-points), and they have shared that they hope to bring a “personal” approach to the normal power-point presentation which we will explain to all of you later.

In addition to the educational and training sessions, we always look forward to socializing with our colleagues from across the country during evening dinners and the Friday or Saturday night banquet/awards dinner. It is comforting and refreshing to know that people across the U.S.A. are working alongside each other to make the desperately needed changes to registries and laws.

“I really think a champion is defined not by their wins but by how they can recover when they fall.”

—Serena Williams

NEWS TIDBITS

1. Statute in Colorado states that you should be able to choose between two treatment programs. Up until recently, that decision was made by the client once they arrived on the outside, and with their Parole Officer. There is now a system that is different. Now people leaving are given a paper which has a list of several treatment programs, and the person who is leaving prison is asked to pick from two. Unfortunately, it does not appear that case managers or others (treatment providers) are assisting people in their choice of programs.

If you do not get a choice of treatment providers, or you have no knowledge of who the various treatment providers are (i.e., there is no biography or explanation of any kind re: the provider), you should ask for one. No one should be asked to choose a treatment provider that has no prior knowledge of the treatment programs listed, and certain basic facts regarding those programs. It is my belief that a short biography of each program should be available so that when you are told to choose a treatment provider and you have not been in treatment on the outside before, you will have some idea who you would like to choose.

2. If you are in S.O treatment, it is important for you to begin to save money for getting out of prison. One of the biggest challenges that we have finding housing is that men have spent their job earnings, and have not saved anything. We know that it is a real challenge, as the salaries that you get inside DOC are not very lucrative (i.e., don't amount to a lot of money) and DOC food is not always that fantastic, but in order for us to ascertain "good faith" on your part in terms of your helping to get yourself ready to leave prison, a knowledge of the importance of saving money is crucial. For older men or men with physical and/or intellectual challenges who may not have an opportunity or have the ability to work, it is important that you rally your family members and friends (if you have them), so that they can assist us in helping you pay your first month's rent, your deposit and in some cases, your application fee. For those with no family or friends, we will do what we can to assist you in getting through your first month's rent etc.
3. We are seeing a number of people who are transforming lower levels in their house or in a couple of cases, transforming small houses to accommodate men coming out of prison. While this housing will likely be considered "transitional" by parole, it is being designed for your comfort as you adjust to the outside. While there will likely not be a strict limit on how long you can stay there, as you become stable in your treatment program, your job, and your ability to get around the area in which you live, it will be smart for you to look over the housing situation in the city or area where you are living, for options that will accept our men and women, as well as for prices that will at some point allow you to move into your own place! Recent success stories make it clear that this is a real probability for many of you. Townhomes, homes in areas that are not right in the midst of the town centre etc. are good places of which to be aware.
4. CSOR has a number of people helping to answer letters. When I receive new letters in the mail, in some cases, depending on the urgency and complexity of particular situations that men or women are in, and the number of people I am already writing to, I may hand some letters over to one of my "partner" letter writers. Those people include names some of you are already familiar with and who have already served you well! It is a huge help to me, and letter writers that are assisting call me for counsel if they have questions. Please know that I would like to be able to write to each of you – it has just become an impossible task. If you have a serious need to call me, you are welcome to do that, but I prefer that you call only once a month, unless there is an emergency of some kind! Thanks for your help and support in this matter.