

Women Against Registry (WAR)

- Why are we here with you today?
 - To introduce you to our registrant families.
 - To show the *multitude* of ways that “hate” is exhibited toward sex offenders and their families.
 - To answer your questions.
 - Build rapport and alliance with an audience that may truly understand the various aspects of our issue.
 - To educate you and to learn from you.

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Hate Studies (as defined by this conference): Inquiries into the human capacity to *define*, and then *dehumanize* or *demonize* an “other” and the processes which inform and give expression to, or can curtail or combat that capacity.

Sex Offender (as defined by WAR) - any individual who has been found guilty of committing an unlawful act that was specifically, generally, or even remotely interpreted by prosecutorial or judicial personnel as a sex offense. These so-called sex offenders are typically subject to harsher prison sentences, longer probation periods, and a lifetime on the sex offender registry. Sex offenses are the only crimes that carry a second punishment of identification on a public registry; a registry that identifies their crime as well as their home and work addresses.

Defining Sex Offenders - Most people would define a sex offender in simplified but severe terms; and most are unaware that such diverse and sometimes innocent acts are treated so harshly.

- The “sex offender” label applies to:
 - violent rape
 - child molestation
 - but equally to:
 - public urination
 - sexting
 - mooning
 - streaking
 - downloading suggestive or abusive images of those purported to be under the legal age
 - sex with underage partner – Romeo & Juliet scenarios where one of the partners aged into an illegal situation.
 - those manipulated by law enforcement personnel in entrapment-like bait-and-switch sting operations
 - False accusations of rape or abuse
 - Those who were lied to by underage female partners (note: this is not a legal defense in most states)

Dehumanizing Sex Offenders

- Typically, to the public, sex offenders have no identity beyond their sex offender label
- Sex offenders are a marginalized and stigmatized subgroup of human beings; pariah’s who are often not deemed worthy or capable of rehabilitation

Demonizing Sex Offenders

- Even though the “crimes” are so diverse, the label applies to all; sex offenders are often viewed as:
 - skulking old men in trench coats exposing themselves

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- pedophiles
- child molesters
- perverts who *will* offend again
- individuals who *cannot* be cured

The Effects of Demonization, a Public Registry, and Fear of Intolerance

- Based on the occurrence of a horrific event within their family, and driven by their emotional state and their desperate need for action, several pioneer advocates pushed to create harsh new laws in the 1980's. Lawmakers fell right in line to appease the public and to get re-elected. (note: these horrific events included kidnappings, rapes, and murders, and while they are indeed horrific, they account for 1% of all sexual offenses).
- If a legislator were to advocate for reform because they recognized that laws had become punitive and overly broad, they would instantly be labeled as pro-sex-offender and virtually assured of defeat in the next election. Being tough on sex offenders is a typical political tactic and plays on the public's fear.
- In most cases a registrant parent is not allowed to attend the school functions of their children.
- Some feel that sex offenders should *never* be released from prison.
- A few state legislators promote surgical or chemical castration of sex offenders.
- Residency restriction have been enacted to keep registrants from living within some arbitrary distance to schools, parks, museums, day care centers, libraries, swimming pools and other facilities. In some cases, a recently released registrant is not able to live with his family in the house that they have owned for years. Sometimes, as in the case of Miami Florida, the residency restrictions prevent registrants from living *anywhere* in the city.
- Registrants are not allowed to travel to certain countries due to International Megan's Law which will soon require registrant passports to be stamped with a special identifier making them targets of ridicule or worse.
- Signs are sometimes placed in the yards of registrant families by law enforcement or vigilante neighbors indicating a "sex offender lives here."
- Some prison facilities and parole officers use penile plethysmographs which are attached to a male's genitals before showing him various images to illicit and record possible levels of arousal.
- Vigilante action – prompted by fear and hate; made easy with the public registry:
 - murder (including family members).
 - beatings (including family members)
 - shootings.
 - homes burned.
 - graffiti spray painted on homes.
 - spouses banned from volunteer or employment positions.
 - children banned from scouting or other organizations.

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- dead animals placed on registrant's property.

“Othering” - This term refers to Outsiders, Non-members, The Unwanted, Foreigners, Aliens, Strangers, Pariahs, Those Who Don't Fit In, Those Who Don't belong.....

- Our families are all too familiar with the terms and concepts
- We (registrants and family members) wear the scarlet letter of the 21st Century
- We are stigmatized now and forever; we live in constant fear:
 - that every conversation will cause us to be scrutinized
 - that every reveal will lead to confrontation
 - that a search prompted by media fear mongering will lead to vigilante action
 - that our loved one will be sent back to prison for falling into the traps set by an unforgiving society
 - that we are a targeted subgroup based on myth and lack of knowledge
 - that we will not be allowed a second chance at life
- sex offenders are the only class of offenders that have a federally mandated public registry. (Megan's Law)
- Human Rights Watch found that only 5 state registries provided enough understandable information for the public to be able to interpret the charge and the age of both the registrant and the victim.
- The sex offender registry was created, ostensibly, to keep people safe in their neighborhoods. In theory, knowing where a sex offender lives will keep one's family safe. This is undeniable nonsense. Using the very same logic and reason, does it not follow that there should also be:
 - an arsonist registry?
 - a drunk driver registry?
 - a burglary registry?
 - a murderer registry?
- We do NOT advocate for any registries. The sex offender registry only serves to destroy the lives of registrants and their families. It cost a tremendous amount of human resources and financial capital and it accomplishes absolutely nothing in terms of crime prevention or neighborhood safety. In fact, there are studies indicating that, because the registry so completely isolates and stigmatizes people, it may in fact, push registrants toward crime simply to survive.
- An Anti “Other” Trait
 - There are more than 861,000 men women and children on the sex offender registry. That is, unfortunately, a very large group that is constantly increasing in size.
 - If this group continues to grow, perhaps it's members will garner some political gains. Perhaps the ability to dehumanize and demonized this “other” group becomes less likely if we grow large enough? Our goal has never been about ‘increasing our numbers’ nor will it ever be. But it is perhaps, a mitigating factor.

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Professionals agree that a person released from incarceration needs a job, a place to live, and a positive support system to successfully re-integrate to society. The hate openly displayed toward our families removes virtually ALL HOPE of a healed community. Our registrants and their families are living in open-air prisons. Isolated without walls. Unwanted and mostly misunderstood because of a preponderance of fear, a lack of education and an unwillingness to talk about this very sensitive subject.

Sex offenders are like any others that have broken our laws. They must pay their debt to society. Paying that debt is part of what brings about justice in our society. But isn't justice also a matter of fairness? Sex offenders and their families are still citizens in this country and still deserve all aspects of our justice system, including fairness without additional hate or stigma.

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Women Against Registry
In Collaboration with
Solitary Nation & Metamora Films
Wants to Thank You for Your Time and Attention Today.

We Have Tried to Bring You into Our World
Just a Little Bit.

We Have Tried to Help You to Understand the Stigma
That Our Families Live With Every Day.

We Humbly Ask You to Use Your Skill and Training
to Devise a Process that Might Help to Change
that aforementioned Stigma.

What Can Be Done?

What Should Be Done?

We Need to do Something!

We Are Here to Answer Your Questions.