

OPINION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

I can't hear you

By Jennifer Haight
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least hear him or her and give his or her greetings validity.

I was walking to one of my classes the other day and I saw someone I knew, so I thought I'd start up some small talk, you know, "Hi, how are you?" "What's up?" that kind of thing. So I did and all I got in return was a head nod. I felt a little bit shafted; I'm not going to lie. However, I did not realize it at the time, but this person was wearing those little ear bud (from now on referred to as "ear bugs" because they eat away at your ear drums) things that are so tiny they are almost invisible and he had the wire under his coat so I definitely could not tell that he was listening to his iPod.

I asked my friend about it and here's what she told me. She said that when she's got her ear bugs in, she does not want to be bothered, and that is the only time she wears them, when she is busy and trying to get something done. When I asked another friend of mine about it, he said that when he is in the library, he gets sick of listening to other people's conversations so he listens to music to block them out. And for this I do not blame him. I do not want to hear about someone's weekend or that they're trying to get tickets to the final game in The World Series.

It sounds selfish, I know, I just want to be heard and acknowledged. Sometimes I feel like a fool when I say "hi" to someone and he or she keeps on walking because he or she couldn't hear my salutations over the loudness of those damn ear bugs.

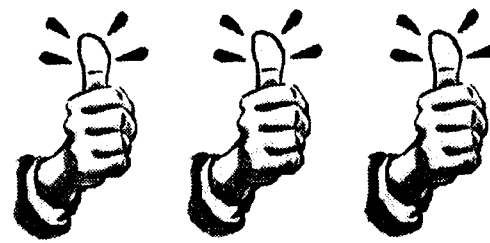
And by the way, those ear bugs that some of you love to wear, they're KILLING your ears. When you put the volume up, they make the little hairs in your ears curl in and prevent them from protecting your ear drums in the ways they should.

So here's what I propose, that you either take them out when you see someone you know approaching or that you keep them at a reasonable volume so that when someone does say "hi" you can at

This all makes sense, of course. But, I am still in a quandary — why is it that people cannot acknowledge me in passing? I make the effort to be nice and say hi, why can't people return the effort and say hi to me, that's all I ask.



Beacon Thumbs Up



- Classes are almost over
- Summer time
- Clear, sunny days
- Words that end in "amburger"
- Google Logo

Beacon Thumbs Down



- People who wear sunglasses inside
- Professors going over class time limit
- Cramming for finals
- Finding a summer job

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All sex offenders are not created equal

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Two citizens of the state of Maine were murdered, on April 17th; they were sex offenders whose debt to society had been paid. They were punished again, this time with death, for crimes not yet committed by a vigilante who utilized the sex offender registry to track them down.

The sex offender registry should be abolished. It encourages recidivism; it is immoral, and its existence is not justifiable except by politicians who encourage ignorance of the reckless application of its branding power.

Recidivism is the likelihood of a criminal to reoffend. This may appear counterintuitive; however, most articles in my research have emphasized that ostracizing pedophiles increases their likelihood of recommitting. On the fringe of society and "showered with scorn" they will not reintegrate. More pressing, obviously, is that "sex offender" does not necessarily mean "pedophile," and in fact means very much the opposite in many exceptional circumstances. There has been more than one case of "that person who mooned the teacher" and "that guy who pissed outside while drunk" ending up on these lists. These citizens are highly unlikely to reoffend; in fact, the majority of actual sexual offenders are less likely to reoffend than the majority of other criminals.

The immorality of the act of revealing such private information about a citizen who has paid his or her debt lies in the definition of the debt. It has been established through several very thorough studies of tens of thousands of actual sex offenders that rates settle around thirty percent immediately alarming, but to this the Department of Justice has asserted that among real "sex crimes," and child molestation in particular, there is a low recidivism rate in compared to other criminal acts, with the high score granted to thieves recommitting felony larceny.

There are many cases that are not uniformly adjudicated because of over-

broad and inconsistent definitions. Get rid of the cases where an eighteen year old sleeps with his or her seventeen year old significant other. Leave the guy whose one night stand changed her mind in the morning alone. Remove the laws that prevent "sex offender" parents from picking up children from daycare because they cannot come within two thousand feet.

With the act in question, the punishment, especially after jail-time, is open for consideration. There are other crimes with post incarceration penalties, but these penalties do not encourage vigilantism in the form of constant humiliation and punishment, identity theft or death. Offenders must inform their neighborhood of their status, and this invites unwarranted and misinformed retribution in most circumstances. Even the idea of a "murderer list" does not spark as much emotion, because of a common understanding of how muddy the moral waters are.

A lack of public understanding of the frivolity of the "sex offender" list's use is no justification for these blatantly un-American actions: in America, we do not punish pre-crime. Even ignoring inherent rights, the case is made by positive rights. Our court system is founded on the idea that we are all free citizens and as such we should not be subject to such ridicule, torture and death. I do not have a problem with private citizens exercising their rights to free speech. I have a problem with government sponsorship thereof. Harassment is still a crime. Murder is a crime.

Besides these incursions, pure retribution is intolerable because the case for pedophilia and other sexual deviancy being "incurable" does not exist. Provided treatment is effective at getting these people to redirect their urges to something more appropriate. This is common among anti-social disorders: it is not good practice to try and wipe all traces of anger from someone with a rage problem (this has been found to be counter-productive and impossible). Instead, we find ways for people to deal with problems that are essentially beyond their control. There are obvious-

ly cases necessitating life sentences serial rapists and psychotics but these are in the minuscule minority.

I propose a system where one offense is punished normally, but a second offense might place one on the registry, if it must be kept. Another possibility is a system where offenders have the ability to make reparations to be removed from the list. Alternately, instead of a registry with names in it, use a system that says "there are this many sex offenders within this many miles," and include the crimes they committed. This way, people can take precautions without allowing vigilantes to hunt. The possibilities are infinitely negotiable and easily improve on current law.

Do we need it because of a lack of personal responsibility---do we need it as a reminder to not let children go to stranger's houses unsupervised? Is it that it is the right of the citizens to be warned if their neighbors are convicted sex-offenders? Why do they not have a right to know if their neighbor is an arsonist or car thief or murderer? They have a house and a car and a life.

Clearly, retribution is ineffective without rehabilitation; however, rehabilitation is insufficient without retribution. If we don't look to retribution at all, then nothing stops the government from forcibly treating or incarcerating citizens. There is a balance in law and in justice, which ought to be maintained by reasonable individuals aware of the consequences of current law and modern science.

A registry is only useful if what is on it is very narrowly defined so that it only includes definitely dangerous offenders. In that case it would have people worth watching out for. But honestly, this issue is so easily spun that nothing could happen anytime soon. They'd say "that man supports sex criminals, how could you vote for him? Think of the children!" Even in the face of exonerated, tortured free men.

The only response is, "I support the rights of every citizen of the United States of America."

Quote of the week

"Remember this: that very little is needed to make a happy life."

-Marcus Aurelius

Submission Guidelines

The Beacon welcomes readers to share their views on this page. Letters and commentary pieces can be submitted by email to dgm147@psu.edu or directly to the Beacon office, located in the Reed Building.

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run the submission.

All submissions must include the writer's year in school, major and name as The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue. All submissions are considered, but because of space limitations, some may not be published.

All submissions must include consent to be edited before they can be edited for publication.