

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ONLINE

www.restorativejustice.org

Update on restorative developments worldwide

January 2010

Following are some of the most-read items from RJOB – [Restorative Justice Online Blog](#) – during the month of December.

News

[Escobar's son seeks atonement for father's sins](#)

from Juan Forero's report on NPR:

Pablo Escobar, who led Colombia's Medellin cocaine cartel, was once the world's most wanted man. At the height of his power in the 1980s, he killed politicians and policemen and ordered an airliner blown out of the sky. With U.S. help, the Colombian police finally hunted him down.

Sixteen years after Escobar's death, the families of his victims haven't forgotten about him. And neither has Escobar's only son [Sebastian Marroquin], whose story is told in a new documentary film that opens Dec. 10 in Colombia and then in January at the Sundance Film Festival.

The son, who lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina, says that he wants to atone for the sins of his father.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/escobars-son-seeks-atonement-for-fathers-sins>

[1,000 children avoid criminal record with apology](#)

from the article in The Herald:

More than 1,000 Westcountry children have escaped being given a criminal record through a programme that sees offenders make amends for their actions.

Devon and Cornwall Police believe that by adopting a more "flexible" approach to "low-level" crime, including graffiti, shoplifting and some public order offences, they can reduce re-offending rates and stop youngsters going to court unnecessarily.

Since the programme's launch last November, 1,031 first-time young offenders aged between 10 and 17 have written letters to victims, painted over graffiti and paid for stolen goods.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/1-000-children-avoid-criminal-record-with-apology>

[Restorative justice: New approaches in Brazil](#)

by luigimorelli on the blog A Revolution of Hope:

Today, most of the deaths of Brazilian adolescents are caused by gang-related murders.

To counteract gangs' advanced organization police repression looks more and more like guerrilla. However, the government is realizing that a strictly adversarial approach is not going to advance a resolution.

In the mid-1990s, Dominic Barter began working with favela residents, including drug gang members, to help them strengthen nonviolent options for working with young people. "I saw violence as a monologue," said Barter, referring to both gang activity and its repression, "I wanted to create a dialogue."

http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/folder_blog_view?b_start:int=30&-C=

Long road to healing in Zimbabwe

from Mark Yaconnelli's article in Ashland Daily Tidings:

On the second day of the National Healing and Reconciliation Workshop, after a period of heartfelt prayers and singing, one pastor stood and read the following: "Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

"This is a day for victims," facilitator Mazvita Machinga announced.

It was a day when organizers hoped to create awareness among pastors and community leaders of the needs of victims of political violence within Zimbabwe. In the first exercise of the day, people were placed in small groups and asked to discuss the following questions: What types of victimization have people in your community experienced? What do these victims feel as a result of their suffering? What do these victims need for healing?

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/long-road-to-healing-in-zimbabwe>

Opinion

Restorative Justice: Where are we now and where are we going? Getting real.

from Christa Pierpont's article reprinted with permission from Restorative and Criminal Justice News and the Association for Conflict Resolution, www.ACRnet.org:

With the March 3 release of *One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections* in the wake of our current economic woes, many of those who work in our community's trenches are relishing the bittersweet moment as we utter, "I told you so". Thirty years of struggling to control the impacts of rapid social migration, challenges to family structures, and the media's overriding influence, our nation has supported increasingly invasive punishments or wildly permissive privileges and excuses. And it should come as no surprise that the punishments have been disproportionately visited upon our most challenged populations.

As we look at the potential inherent in restorative justice to bring people to their senses in actively responsible ways—will this be done while also taking the time to address the structural harms we've incurred through unprecedented levels of social exclusion? Social exclusions that begin at pre-school, follow up through failure to graduate from school with marketable skills, into our courts and prisons, then aggravated by the continual lack of support for re-entry strategies that bring people back into the community prepared to support themselves and others in meaningful ways. While across town in an up-scale neighborhood another person undermines their colleagues' ability to support themselves and their family but is not held to account because they can afford to get away with it. Our current investment in justice leaves many of us cynical and frustrated. We are weary of adding new layers of unfunded mandates and increasing penalties to increase our neighbor's chances of having their daily lives better protected. A recent statement at our state's General Assembly session brought waves of self-conscious laughter when one representative commented that they were not aware that there were any misdemeanors left but they were all now classified as felonies.

10 ways to live restoratively

from Howard Zehr's article on Restorative Justice Blog:

1. Take relationships seriously, envisioning yourself in an interconnected web of people, institutions and the environment.
2. Try to be aware of the impact - potential as well as actual - of your actions on others and the environment.
3. When your actions negatively impact others, take responsibility by acknowledging and seeking to repair the harm - even when you could probably get away with avoiding or denying it. (To craft a letter of apology, see the Apology Letter website developed by Loreen Walker and Ben Furman.)
4. Treat everyone respectfully, even those you don't expect to encounter again, even those you feel don't deserve it, even those who have harmed or offended you or others.
5. Involve those affected by a decision, as much as possible, in the decision-making process.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/10-ways-to-live-restoratively>

Restorative justice from a survivor's perspective

by Penny Beerntsen

Note: this article originally appeared as a comment responding to a posting by Lisa Rea. We were concerned that many readers may have missed it and so are posting it as its own entry. We are grateful to Penny Beerntsen for her willingness to share her extraordinary story.

As a survivor of a violent crime, I am a firm believer in the power of restorative justice programs to transform both the victim and the offender. I learned about victim offender conferencing shortly after surviving a violent sexual assault and attempted murder. Although I was unable to meet with my offender, as he had not taken responsibility for his crime, I began participating in victim impact panels inside prisons. Although I was not speaking directly to my offender, I was telling my story to others who were incarcerated for violent crimes, including rape. Much of my healing took place inside maximum security prisons as a result of the dialogue I engaged in with these offenders. If someone had told me at the time of the crime that this would be the case, I would have told that individual they were crazy! I participated in these panels because I thought I had something to offer the offenders. I learned that the process, if properly conducted, is mutually beneficial.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/restorative-justice-from-a-survivors-perspective>

The Monitor's View: Seattle cop-killer case – the exception, not the rule

from the Christian Science Monitor's editorial:

The case of the ambush and killing of four police officers in a coffee shop near Seattle on Sunday is exceptionally troubling – emphasis on exceptionally.

Four police officers shot, execution-style. Their families struggle to recover as they mourn. The suspect, Maurice Clemmons – released from jail just days before the ambush, despite a long history of violent crime and known mental problems. After a massive manhunt, he's dead, too, shot early Tuesday by a policeman investigating a stolen car.

The extraordinary nature of this crime is why it's captured the nation's attention. But it's also a reason for caution. High-profile crimes have a tendency to rank emotion over reason when it comes to the criminal justice system.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/the-monitors-view-seattle-cop-killer-case-2013-the-exception-not-the-rule>

Better not bitter says activist Mukoko

By Taurainashe Manonge in The Zimbabwe Telegraph:

Abducted and tortured activist Jestina Mukoko, has said that the pain and trauma she experienced in the hands of state officials last year, has left her Better and not bitter.

Speaking on December 17, 2009 at a meeting organised by the Zimbabwe Human rights forum to celebrate her City of Weimar Human Rights Award, Mukoko also director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, said it was inner strength and the knowledge that people all over the world were rallying alongside with her that kept her going.

“I believe there was a purpose in all this. It might have been a nasty experience but looking at how I now deal with people who have been tortured I have a different perspective to it.”

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/better-not-bitter-says-activist-mukoko>

Practice

Restorative justice talking circles: The simplest of questions can connect us

From an entry on Kris Miner's blog Restorative Justice and Circles:

I came up with the “getting acquainted” question off the top of my head. I asked what winter clothing item, do you most enjoy wearing. It was the last class of the semester so about the 16th Circle for this group. I was impressed and struck by how connected we became over articles of clothing.

A student just a few seats to my right, turned up his jeans at the ankle, and talked about loving his flannel jeans. Of course I thought how I always wanted to get a pair of those. The talking piece was across the Circle, another student, made comment to his peer across the Circle ” . . . me, too” and showed the flannel lining of his jeans.

Someone else talked about loving mittens that divide your fingers on the inside. I connected with that. It was really fun a round of answers to listen to.

A recent evaluation form had the feedback that what the person liked least was “too much fluff at the beginning, unnecessary”. I thought about that Circle, and I know I spent some time getting all 22 people feeling comfortable. I do feel the stages are structured to get us prepared for the tougher questions.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/restorative-justice-talking-circles-the-simplest-of-questions-can-connect-us>

West Yorkshire Police try an unusual Christmas card

from the press release:

A ten year old girl's letter is the focal point of this year's Bradford District Christmas burglary campaign. The letter was written to the man who burgled her home and left her scared to return or go out in the area. Amy Winteridge wrote down her feelings so that they could be read out at a meeting her Mum had with the man who had burgled them as part of West Yorkshire Probation Service's restorative justice process. On reading the letter the man was visibly moved by what Amy had to say.

The letter is now the centre of a special Christmas card which will be sent out to known burglars across the Bradford District. It's hoped that it will make some of them think about their actions and how they affect children in the homes they target. The card will be hand delivered to a lot of the criminals and former criminals by Officers from Neighbourhood Policing Teams to give that extra personal reminder that the Police will be watching them in the run up to Christmas.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/west-yorkshire-police-try-an-unusual-christmas-card>

Research

Peacebuilding Compared Project

from the project's website:

The United Nations is putting foreign troops and police into peacekeeping operations more than in the past. So are other organisations like the African Union. What works in peacebuilding? What are the kinds of interventions that create wars and make things worse for the people? How can international peacebuilding and international law contribute to justice and human development after armed conflict? These are the questions we seek to answer in the Peacebuilding Compared Project.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/peacebuilding-compared-project>

Reviews

Review: When Brute Force Fails: How to have less crime and less punishment

from Robert H. Frank's review in the New York Times:

Law enforcement policy in the United States rests implicitly on the “rational actor” model of traditional economics, which holds that people take only those actions whose benefits exceed their costs.

This model says that crime will be deterred if the expected punishment is strong enough — a prediction that has not been borne out in practice. Although long sentences are now common and the incarceration rate is five times what it was during most of the 20th century, the crime rate is still two and a half times the average of 1950-62.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/review-when-brute-force-fails-how-to-have-less-crime-and-less-punishment>

Advocacy

Making Good in England: Engaging with the public for restorative justice reform

by Dan Van Ness

There is no more interesting laboratory for restorative justice implementation right now than England and Wales. For several years the government has embarked on a campaign to mainstream restorative responses in the Youth Justice System. One of the characteristics of this effort – at least as viewed from outside – has been a willingness to try new approaches.

The Youth Justice System is overseen by the Youth Justice Board, whose website is well worth reviewing by any other government attempting to place restorative values and processes in the context of a complete systemic response. Its section on the Youth Justice System is rich with information, and is frequently updated.

One new feature is the Making Good Project, which invites members of the public from North West England to propose community reparation activities to assign to young offenders. It offers examples of

reparation projects currently used (along with testimonials from young offenders and the beneficiaries of their work). After outlining the guidelines to determine acceptable projects, it invites public recommendations. It even features a new blog which is expected to relate stories about reparation and youth justice. These are admirable (and exemplary) efforts to recruit support from the general public.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/making-good-in-england>

Revise laws to lower prison costs, keep everyone safer

by Michael Timmis and Pat Nolan in freep.com:

Michigan has more than an economic crisis -- we have a crime crisis, too. And we won't be able to solve the overall budget shortfall without making significant cuts in the corrections budget. Our current criminal justice system is costing us over a billion dollars a year, far more than our neighboring states are spending. Yet despite this huge expense for corrections, our communities are still plagued by crime.

Here are a few troubling facts:

- Michigan's violent crime rate is higher than all other states in the Great Lakes region.
- Corrections is the third most expensive item in Michigan's budget, with only health care and education costing more.
- The Michigan Department of Corrections employs one out of every three state workers....

But we have good news....

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/revise-laws-to-lower-prison-costs-keep-everyone-safer>

Civil Rights and Restorative Justice project at Northeastern University School of Law

from the project's website:

The Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project (CRRJ) conducts research and supports policy initiatives on anti-civil rights violence in the United States and other miscarriages of justice of that period. Located at Northeastern University School of Law, CRRJ serves as a resource for scholars, policymakers, and organizers involved in various initiatives seeking justice for crimes of the civil rights era.

There is broad consensus in American political culture that the law enforcement system, particularly in the Deep South, failed to protect participants in the 1960s-era Civil Rights Movement from anti-civil rights violence. Communities across the country are grappling with how to make amends decades after these events. Some have turned to the criminal justice system. State and local prosecutors have brought fresh cases against the perpetrators of old hate crimes. Federal legislation has been proposed to enhance state investigations. A sense of urgency hangs over these efforts, for those most affected by the events are aging.

CRRJ focuses on these public policy and criminal justice initiatives. It conducts research into the nature and extent of anti-civil rights violence. CRRJ works with members of a diverse community – prosecutors, lawmakers, victims – that is seeking genuine reconciliation through legal proceedings, law reform, and private investigations. CRRJ assists these groups to assess and develop a range of policy approaches, including criminal prosecutions, truth and reconciliation proceedings, and legislative remedies. On the research front, CRRJ's work aims to develop reliable data with which to analyze events of anti-civil rights violence and to support research into the history and current significance of anti-civil rights violence.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/civil-rights-and-restorative-justice-project-at-northeastern-university-school-of-law>

About RJOB

The purpose of RJOB is to provide timely information about restorative justice news and developments, together with commentary on the use and expansion of restorative justice.
<http://www.restorativejustice.org/RJOB/about-rjob>

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