

Brothers keeper

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



BROTHERS KEEPER Am I my brother's keeper? " Innocent until proven guilty, " and very often outside perspectives can drive a wedge between convicted murderers and their family. On many occasions family members are frowned upon because of the wrong doings of another family member. Whether it is a close relative or a distant relative that you are considered close to, their actions can very well leave a negative impact on your life. Despite what so called close friends will tell you, depending on the nature of the crime, and who was involved if those people feel strongly about the issue they could very well turn on you. Instead of being a shoulder to cry on or to just lend a listening ear those people will look at you in a different light. So unfortunately family find themselves questioning should they risk losing their friends or should they support their family. Despite what some believe to be the U. S. Constitution stating that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law society " friends and family" will almost always hold their own mental trial, and the end result is conviction not considering the feelings of all involved. When a family member is convicted of a serious crime, the remaining family is left to pick up the pieces. Therefore family members of convicted murderers sometimes find it difficult to cope with being torn between family, friends, and the victims. Generally people have their own perception as to what is right and what is wrong. Very often society has an unrealistic social stigma in reference to individuals that have had some type of involvement with the justice system. It is very unfortunate that those individuals have developed a social prejudice against those that have made terrible choices in life, and sadly they cast the blame where it does not belong. In the 1998 No Second

Chances for Murderers, Rapists, or Child Molesters Act, former Republican Attorney General of Florida Bill McCollum states, “ Too often in our criminal justice system, dangerous career criminals are released into the community when they should have remained in prison”. (U. S. Government Printing Office, 2000) He goes on to say, “ The lack of accountability in our criminal justice system, particularly for murderers and rapists, destroys innocent lives”. (U. S. Government Printing Office, 2000) Mr. McCollum clearly states his bias and his opinion throughout this act. Like Mr. McCollum many people do not believe that a person could very well have been falsely accused and never should have been imprisoned in the first place. Nor do they believe that very many are truly remorseful for their wrong doings and have honestly been rehabilitated. A statement like this makes it appear that Mr. McCollum may have never been in a situation where a loved one has had to pay a debt to society. If it were so Mr. McCollum would know that not only are “ innocent lives” affected but “ all lives” are affected. Unfortunately those that lost a family member due to death at another person’s hands have to find some way to move on with their lives. On the other hand those that have lost a family member to the criminal justice system for committing those crimes have to find a way to not only continue living life, but they also have to find a way to be supportive and understanding of what their family has done. In a blog on “ spouse0eofaninmate. blogspot. com” a wife of an inmate shares with her readers about how the incarceration of her husband not only affected her but it also affected her children. She posts a blog from her son’s journal and at the time, she wasn’t aware of the extent of his feelings but soon found out as he expressed what he and his siblings

endured after their father was incarcerated. The blogger states that her son says that he and his siblings were bullied, picked at, and physically assaulted due to what their father had done. She also talks about how she lost the respect and love of friends and family members. She states that it was as if "they had committed the crime themselves". It is unfortunate that this family has had to endure this type of abuse due to public ignorance, and even more unfortunate that everyone has been affected. Innocent until proven guilty or were they ever even guilty at all? It is horrible that many of the incarcerated are truly in many situations innocent. So many convicted felons are falsely accused. Despite the fact that these individuals pay a debt that was never theirs to begin with, they still have to answer to that crime for the rest of their lives. Once a convicted felon unfortunately always a convicted felon, individuals find it difficult to find employment, find housing, and move on with their lives due to social prejudice. There are very few support systems for individuals that have been incarcerated and sadly sometimes this leads them to a life of crime just to survive. It is very unfortunate that a person cannot or is not allowed to pick up the pieces after a mistake is made. That is not saying that repeat offenders should not be punished and sent through due process. However does the innocent ever have a voice? Because of statements like Mr. McCollum makes in reference to individuals belonging behind bars, and believing that a person cannot or should not be given a second chance is a horrible prejudice and needs to be corrected. From different perspectives despite what side of the criminal justice system you are on certain individual's mindsets needs to be changed. It is time out for social prejudices, badly informed standpoints, and stereotyping. Whether a

person knows someone that has committed a crime, or is related to someone that has committed a crime, everyone's feelings should be considered.

Playing the hand that was dealt is not always an easy task, however anyone that is a convicted felon has to play that hand and walk in those shoes daily.

Society needs to learn to turn the other cheek and put themselves in the other person's shoes. At any time anyone can make a bad decision that could affect them for the rest of their lives. Again losing a family member due to death or to incarceration is a prison within itself, and an individual should not be held responsible for their family's wrong doings. Rehabilitation is possible and everyone deserves a second chance. References Mest, K. "

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