

Public shaming essay



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Public shaming is a demeaning practice that should not be used. It has spanned the ages, changed its techniques, and yet produced little results. There are other forms of disciplines that can be used before resorting to a method that does not work. Public shaming is where a criminal is humiliated in public instead of receiving an imprisonment. Some of the practices that public shaming might include are branding, stoning, mutilation, and different tactics that may cause physical and mental abuse.

The idea is that a criminal that is found guilty of a crime will therefore be so shamed among their friends, peers, and colleagues that they will never commit a crime again. Historically, public shaming has been around since the beginning of time and around the world. It is important to understand this history. In ancient Rome public shaming was added to the death penalty during crucifixions. Crucifixions were where the guilty were nailed to a cross to die, but they were also stripped down naked and humiliated in public first.

This practice not only shamed the individual and their families before putting them to death, but it also served as a deterrent to others. In the Middle East, thieves would have their hands cut off for stealing in order to prevent them from stealing again. Cutting off the hands also allowed others to identify who a thief was while serving as a deterrent. In the Middle Ages of Britain and France all the way to Colonial America, people who broke certain laws were placed in the stocks or pillory of a public square.

The stocks were a device that locked the head and hands of an individual to keep them from defending themselves. While in the stocks, community members would not only see the law breaker, but also ridicule and throw

things at them as well. The examples presented are just some of the forms of public shaming throughout history. From so called civilized nations to uncivilized nations, each had its own form of public shaming. It must be noted that public shaming is not something that is left simply for the history books.

Public shaming also continues to be practiced and utilized today. Although techniques have changed, the goal remains the same. Mutilating practices have gone from being very brutal physically and mentally to practices less physical and more mental. One example of public shaming used today is where a criminal is ordered to present themselves in public for a set amount of time and to wear a sign depicting the crime that they are guilty of. Unlike the days of old, people do not throw things. Yet another form of public shaming utilized today involves pedophiles.

Pedophiles can be ordered to approach each and every house in the neighborhood that they wish to reside in, and inform the community that they are a pedophile and will be living in the neighborhood. One last form to be mentioned here on the many techniques of public shaming still practiced today is the media. Newspapers, televisions, and the internet are routinely used to shame individuals in a myriad of ways. One of the many forms of public shaming used by the mass media involves the printing of a criminals name and their crime in the local newspaper for their readers to see.

Clearly, public shaming is alive and well even in today's day and age. The sole problem with the use of public shaming as a form of justice is the idea of the self fulfilling prophecy. The self fulfilling prophecy tells us that if an

individual is viewed and treated a certain way by others in society, the individual is more likely to be expected to continue to act the way that they are viewed and treated by that society. This philosophy cannot speak any more true. Take for instance the use of branding.

When a criminal was convicted of a certain crime, they were then branded on the forehead by a hot iron rod with a letter depicting their crime. The problem with this form of punishment is it actually created more of a criminal. Once that individual had been branded, they could no longer get a job, have relationships, or be viewed and treated any less than being a criminal. So naturally, if the individual cannot receive these things it becomes a matter of human survival. Concerning this human survival, the branded individual is now faced with a decision to do whatever they have to do in order to obtain a productive livelihood.

If the branded individual is prevented from obtaining this honest and legal livelihood because of their past transgressions, it is only natural that the individual will resort to obtaining it through further dishonest and illegal means. This becomes a further cycle of not only preventing the individual from becoming better, but it made them worse than they were to begin with. Furthermore, each and every society would have to spend more money in instituting more protection for a criminal that was created by a society that did not solve the problem as to why the criminal was committing the crime to begin with.

Whether the branding of a criminal is placed on their body by a hot iron rod or their name placed in a newspaper, the same idea of the self fulfilling

prophecy applies. A person with their name in a newspaper is automatically branded by society as being a criminal. Depending on the size of the town and how wide the publicity, the individual that is socially branded literally either has to move out of the city/neighborhood/country, or accept their fate and further become a criminal. The fact of the matter is public shaming does not work: My colleagues and I conclude that ultimately shame is not enough to catalyze major social change.

Slavery did not end because abolitionists shamed slave owners into freeing their slaves. Child labor did not stop because factories were shamed into forbidding children to work. Destruction of the ozone layer did not slow because industries were ashamed to manufacture products that contained chlorofl uorocarbons. This is why punishment remains imperative.

Throughout history, out of all the different forms of public humiliation the world over, the only thing that has happened has been the population only increasing and crimes only increasing along with it.

From the times of ancient Rome to present day, from the most brutal of methods to the less brutal of methods, the only thing public shaming has done is to further create criminals, or have people commit suicide. Nowhere has public shaming actually looked at solving the actual problem. Every single practice listed above, from the past to the present, from one country to the next has failed in trying to solve crime through this way. No one argues that there does not need to be a punishment, but rehabilitative punishment is the best approach.

Stigmatizing shaming, which focuses on the offender and thereby treats him as a bad person, effectively separates the offender from the community, rendering him an outcast, often for life. Re-integrative shaming, on the other hand, focuses on the offender's actions, thereby treating him as a good person who has done a bad deed. As the name suggests, it also seeks to reintegrate the offender, rather than to forever banish him from participation in the life of the community.

Rehabilitative punishment not only would punish the criminal for the crime, but also help in finding out why the criminal committed the crime to begin with. Once this is determined, steps can be taken to ensure that the criminal does not commit the crime again. These steps can include counseling, job training, restitution, etc., but public shaming does not work, never has, and never will. History alone and the idea of the self fulfilling prophecy should tell us that. If there is no solution to the problem, shame and fear will continue to never be a deterrent to crime when someone is in need of desperate help.