

# The Columbus Dispatch

---

## Luncheon spreads message that not all offenders fit in same basket

By Megan Henry

The Columbus Dispatch

Posted Oct 17, 2017 at 6:05 PM

Updated Oct 17, 2017 at 6:05 PM

Marcia White is neither proud nor ashamed that she killed her abusive husband.

“It is an unfortunate fact about my life, but nonetheless, I did commit a violent act,” White said.

Standing in the Statehouse Atrium Tuesday afternoon, she was one of five speakers — either victims of crime or formerly incarcerated Ohioans — who spoke at the R3 Legislative Luncheon. The three Rs stand for rehabilitation, restoration and redemption.

Re-entry and criminal justice reform were a common thread among the speakers, and discussion focused on the Modify Criminal Sentencing and Corrections Law, Sierah’s Law and the Reagan Tokes Act.

The sentencing and corrections law is generally aimed at moving low-level, nonviolent offenders out of prison, or preventing them from going there in the first place. Sierah’s

Law would make the attorney general establish and maintain a state registry of violent offenders by Dec. 31. The Reagan Tokes Act focuses on the sentencing of violent offenders, electronic monitoring and re-entry standards for inmates.

Tracy Van Sickle argues all felony crimes shouldn't be lumped together, because each circumstance surrounding the crime is different.

"While looking at these bills today before us and with much empathy for the victims of crime, their families and their friends, there are many unintended consequences regarding these bills as they stand," said Sickle, who spent 12 years in prison.

Eddie Slade, a restored violent offender, said the prison system needs to be revisited and fixed.

"If you want to repair a car, you can't take it to a doctor. You gotta take it to a mechanic so if you want to help somebody become rehabilitated, reintegrated, you got to get restored citizens involved in the process," Slade said of ex-offenders.

Joey Green, a former violent offender who works in reentry, questioned putting everyone that is labeled a violent offender in the same box.

"I'm not asking society to forget what I've done, but I would like a fair chance to keep my past behind me," Green said.

Rev. Dr. Johannes Christian unintentionally became a victim of a violent crime 16 years ago when he drove his car under an underpass on I-70 just before midnight. A fifteen year-old boy dropped a 10-pound rock off the side of a bridge that shattered the car's windshield, hitting Christian in the face.

"Every bone was made sawdust in my head," Christian said.

He wanted to see the teenager go to prison, but he was conflicted.

"I wanted to see him get the max that he could get for what he had done, but at the same time I struggled in my heart because the Word of God that I believed in suggested everybody deserves to be forgiven," Christian said.

Over time, he forgave his offender and even met with him in prison.

"Every victim is not the same, neither is every perpetrator," Christian said.

*Megan Henry is a fellow in the E.W. Scripps Statehouse News Bureau.*

[mhenry@dispatch.com](mailto:mhenry@dispatch.com)

[@megankhenry](#)