

Disrespecting Jessica

The national media won't tell you, but in Miami right now, a man named John Couey is on trial for brutally killing a 9-year-old girl named Jessica Lunsford. Couey, a convicted sex offender, kidnapped Jessica out of her modest Florida home, brought her to a trailer, sexually abused her, and then buried her alive. When authorities found her body, she was clutching a stuffed dolphin.

Because of that heinous act, the state of Florida passed "Jessica's Law," which mandates that a first-time conviction for felony sexual battery on a child will result in a 25 years-to-life prison sentence. No plea bargain, no parole, no nutty judge dispensing light punishment. You do it once—you're gone.

In the past three years, 41 out of 50 states have passed a version of Jessica's Law, but there is still powerful opposition to it. Many trial lawyers object because they want the ability to plea bargain. Some judges dissent because their egos are bruised. They are taken out of the equation after a child predator is convicted. And many in the left-wing media object to Jessica's Law on the grounds that it is cruel and unusual punishment; these people want rehabilitation for violent sexual offenders who brutalize children.

Let's deal with the rehab situation first. In our system of justice, the punishment must fit the crime. If you rape or sexually brutalize a child, that child will never fully recover. For the rest of that person's life, the crime will be played out in a variety of ways. Thus, the punishment must be the forfeiture of freedom for much of the abuser's life. That's punishment fitting the crime.

The defense lawyers simply should be ashamed. Crimes against children are the worst crimes. There's no way lawyers should

be bartering the suffering of kids. Again, society has no obligation to rehab or to be lenient with sexual predators, especially when they brutalize children.

In the case of Jessica Lunsford, John Couey told police he did it. He wrote me a letter stating that he had help in brutalizing the child. Yet his three "roommates" were never charged by a cowardly district attorney named Brad King. And a judge threw out Couey's confession because of a Miranda violation.

I have no doubt the despicable Couey will be convicted in the Miami courtroom. But you won't hear much about it from the New York Times or the Washington Post or the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. That's because these papers continue to look away from the horror of child sexual abuse. It doesn't fit into their "restorative justice" philosophy, where the criminal as well as the victim must be "healed."

Finally, cowardly politicians in states like Vermont, Massachusetts, and Colorado, among others, have succeeded in blocking Jessica's Law. In the Colorado legislature, all six Democrats in the House Judiciary Committee voted against allowing Jessica's Law to come to the floor for a full vote. The same six Democrats voted against forcing sexual offenders to register online so that people would know who is addressing them on the Internet. The names of the Democrats in Colorado who voted against protecting children are Terrance Carroll, Mike Cerbo, Andy Kerr, Rosemary Marshall, Claire Levy, and Morgan Carroll. These individuals are misguided and their actions will lead to more children being brutalized.

Americans of all political persuasions must rise up and demand that their representatives protect the children. No plea bargaining on this one. You vote against Jessica's Law, you're hurting the kids.