

The Law of Common Sense *by Marilyn Reeves*

I'd like to add a new law – nay, make that a Constitutional Amendment – called The Law of Common Sense, which would state:

“WHENEVER IN DOUBT AS TO THE MOTIVE, CAUSE, OR APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT FOR A GIVEN CRIME, THE LAW OF COMMON SENSE SHALL APPLY, AND SUPERSEDE ALL OTHER LAWS, PAST AND PRESENT.”

Recently a teenager was accused of murdering his parents, and the question arose whether or not he should be tried as an adult. That case should be included under the Law of Common Sense, and the verdict would be: NEVER!

Of course, murdering one's parents is a heinous crime, and the young offender obviously has a problem. He may have been under the influence of some of the current media, including video games that not only glamorize the use of bloodshed, but educate kids in the most horrific, pain-inflicting methods of torture, degradation and murder. Perhaps he wanted to impress his peers, hoping they'd think his outrageous act was “really awesome”! Maybe he was abused by his parents, and was seeking retribution. Or perhaps he suffers from severe mental illness or the devastating effects of drug abuse.

Whatever the reason, the young man needs help. However terrible his crime, he is still young enough to be redirected by compassionate professionals who have the insight and

ability to help him turn his life around. At his young age, rehabilitation is still a possibility. According to Dr. Phil McGraw, the frontal lobe of the human brain – that part of the brain that controls judgment – isn't even fully developed until the age of 25. Imagine if you were sentenced to a lifetime in prison for some indiscretion you committed in your youth! Most of us can't even remember the dumb things we said or did when we were kids. Most of us develop an entirely different way of thinking when we become adults.

A number of years ago I had a part-time job as a receptionist for the Arapahoe County District Attorney's Office of Juvenile Diversion. There was an 8-year old boy who had been hauled before the court as a sexual offender because he had been caught playing sex games with his 4-year old cousin. Well, for heaven's sake – that sort of thing is part of a normal childhood! I should imagine that the little girl was far less traumatized by the game than that poor little boy who was treated like a criminal for his offense. Talk about lasting scars! Where was the Law of Common Sense in that incident?

And we all remember the story of the little girl who was suspended from school for bringing a paring knife in her lunch box. I'm sure that I wasn't alone in thinking, whatever happened to common sense? Apparently it is in short supply.

There ought to be a law.