Overlooked Prison Sentence

Maya Angelou said, “Forgiving is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself.” The premise of this quote is to demonstrate that when one forgives others, everybody wins. With regards to the man who had his prison sentence overlooked, it is imperative that the state forgives him of his past crime of armed robbery. If he is forced to serve his prison sentence, the cycle of violence will, most likely, continue if his children are forced to live out their formative years without a father. Prison is meant to be rehabilitative through punitive measures, but if rehabilitation is achieved, are punitive measures required? And did anyone, honestly, expect him to turn himself in?

One of the major issues in today’s society is the lack of good role models. No one has the power to be a more powerful role model than a parent. Children who grow up in families where two parents are present and loving, are much more likely to be successful and productive citizens. Taking this man away from his family at this point would be cruel, and would demonstrate that the state is more concerned with punishing the guilty, and less concerned about whether or not those crimes are going to be repeated; common sense tells you that if this man is taken away from his children, the odds of them becoming criminals significantly increases.

Prisons, in theory, are meant to be rehabilitative. What this means is that criminals go to prison to pay their debt to society, and in the process, realize the error of their ways, and not want to be a repeat offender. The hope of any law enforcement official is that a prisoner will not return after his or her sentence has been served. In this situation, the man was rehabilitated without the punitive part of the equation. The goal of not being a repeat offender was achieved. If the state pursues a prison sentence, even after the man has become a viable citizen, it will prove that it was motivated more out of spite, and less out of logic.

It is important to remember that there are few people who would willingly turn themselves in to law enforcement to serve a prison sentence. It is also important to remember that this man did not flee the country, or even the state. This demonstrates that he was obviously willing to serve the sentence. This, most definitely, should be considered a mitigating factor, meaning that some credit should be given to the man for not becoming a fugitive.

Some members of society believe that this man should still have to serve his sentence because he committed the crime and needs to be held responsible for actions. While it is true that people need to be held responsible for their actions, a major part of holding someone responsible for committing a crime is to dissuade that person from doing it again. This man has proven, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he will not repeat his past indiscretions.

As the essay has demonstrated, there is no logical reason why this man should be sent to prison. His family will suffer due to his absence, and he has already rehabilitated himself. The justice system needs to show citizens that they are more concerned with results, and less concerned about making sure someone is punished, even if that punishment is no longer necessary to nurture rehabilitation.