UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Institute of Criminology

Listening to the Crime Victim: Evaluating victim input at sentencing and parole

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Institute of Criminology Public Seminar Series

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Seminar Room B3, Institute of Criminology, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 9DA

Crime victims have come to play an increasingly important role in the criminal process. One manifestation of this is the proliferation in the use of victim impact statements at sentencing and parole hearings. Across the common law world victims are allowed to submit an impact statement to a sentencing court or parole board. Many US states go further and encourage (or allow) victims to recommend a specific sentence to the court or to express their views on the release of the offender on parole. This seminar explores the uses and effects of victim impact evidence at sentencing and parole. I draw upon empirical research involving crime victims and criminal justice professionals, as well as a review of statutory provisions in a number of common law jurisdictions. Although justifications may be advanced for victim input at sentencing, there appears to be less justification for allowing victim input at parole. Victim input at corrections would appear to be an example of what has been termed "punitive victim rights" and is inconsistent with sound correctional principles or principles of fundamental justice.

Julian Roberts is Professor of Criminology in the Faculty of Law, University of Oxford and Editor of the *European Journal of Criminology*. His publications include *Punishing Persistent Offenders* (2008; OUP); and *The Virtual Prison* (CUP; 2005). Most recently he co-edited *Hearing the Victim: Adversarial Justice, Crime Victims, and the State* with Professor Anthony Bottoms (Willan Publishing, published in March 2010).

This seminar is part of the IoC Public Seminar Series, and is open to all interested in attending. If you wish to be added to the seminar mailing list, please contact: Joanne Garner, on: jf225@cam.ac.uk