

TOP STORIES

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Porn On Debate



CARBONDALE -- Some say it's disgusting material that demeans women and ruins lives. Others say it's simply entertainment protected by freedom of speech.

Both sides in the argument over pornography faced off at SIU Tuesday night. Ron Jeremy, a man who's been in more than a thousand adult movies spoke to a packed house at SIU. He was debating Craig Gross, the founder of the XXX Church, an organization that preaches the dangers of porn.

"I was working in a church and I noticed this huge theme amongst the kids that were in my youth group that they were struggling with pornography," said Gross.

Gross says porn is addictive and can hurt families.

"Sure it can be addictive and have all kinds of problems but look, many people use it responsibly," said Jeremy.

Gross and Jeremy weren't the only ones with a standing room only crowd in southern Illinois. Attorney General

Lisa Madigan spent the day shaking hands with residents in Marion. She sides with Gross.

"Anyone out there promoting pornography is doing real damage to children and real damage to women," said Madigan.

Jeremy argues porn is simply freedom of speech.

"And they have every right to argue that, but they also have to argue against the statistics of what pornography does: it destroys lives, and there's no "if" "and's" about it," said Todd Greiner, Pastor at Community of Faith Church in Herrin.

Earlier this year his congregation urged local businesses to remove porn from their stores or face a boycott.

"We knew we were not going to remove pornography from southern Illinois, we know that. But if we can make a dent, if we could just make a small change it was worth the effort of doing that," said Greiner.

"They keep complaining about Hustler in every store, there's a Gideon Bible in every hotel room and I don't care. don't mind seeing it there I think it's nice, so freedom of speech works for both of us," said Jeremy.

The debate between Jeremy and Gross was sponsored by SIU's Student Programming Council. Organizers had planned for about 1500 people.

But they estimate some 3,000 showed up. Jeremy and Gross have done about 30 debates at college campuses across the country.

Gross says he teamed up with Jeremy because he knew that would draw large crowds of college kids. And, it give Gross a chance to reach as many people as possible.

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