

Juvenile death penalty



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Juvenile Death Penalty Before a juvenile court was established in Chicago in 1899, those under the age of seventeen years who committed crime were tried in the system of the adult. Later on, psychologists in their research work, they started to see juveniles as those youth who have just lost their ways not as hardened criminals.

Though those who qualify to be called juvenile varies from state to state, most states categories everyone between the ages of seven and seventeen as juvenile. Those below the age of seven years are usually held accountable by defense of infancy. The judges are the one who decide in a juvenile court cases not the jury.

Rehabilitation of juveniles is the main aim of the juvenile justice system not imprisoning and punishing them as majority of us think. Juvenile courts are closed to the public unlike the normal proceedings that are open to the public. Juvenile court proceedings are sealed hence no one see them and they are later on destroyed when the juvenile reaches between the age of eighteen and twenty one years. In law, the news media are not usually supposed to report the name of the minor involved in a criminal proceedings.

Unlike the adults' status, the minors' status has special penalties, restrictions and protection. In many western countries, the rights and status of minors is compared to the state of women and racial minorities before they acquired equal right. United States and Somalia have not ratified the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child like all other members states of the United Nations.

The News Hour with Jim Lehrer presented a debate on the decision of the Supreme Court ruling to ban death penalty of murderers of under the age of

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eighteen years. The debate was held on March 1, 2005 the same day the ruling was made. It was presented by Gwen Ifill as she hosted Jan Crawford Greenburg - The Chicago Tribune. They discussed that the days' ruling by the Supreme Court ruling on the ban of death penalty on convicted murderers of those under the age of eighteen years covered common issues of life, death and immorality. They were concerned with the way death penalties were imposed on children between the age of sixteen and seventeen years as this was only practiced in the United States only.

According to Jan Crawford Greenburg, she raised an issue on how Justice Kennedy was unhappy with the shameful practice of the government on execution of children aged between the age of sixteen and seventeen years. There was no reason of executing juveniles since they are not responsible as adults according to Justice Kennedy. The United States stood alone in execution of criminals in who are aged seventeen years and below.

According to Greenburg, they knew very well before the ruling that the court was opposed to the government execution of those below the age of seventeen years. This was a shameful practice which they were not happy with and they were looking forward to doing away with.

Greenburg was surprised by the Justice Kennedy opinion in his ruling where she said that there was no good reason the government to execute juvenile. She said in his ruling Justice Kennedy said that the jury is not the one who should make this decision but it was a consensus that United States state should do away with this decision of executing juvenile. This is because the United State stood alone in this shameful practice against the international community. The decision to ban the death penalty resulted to new sentences for Christopher Simmons and other 71 juveniles who were on death

sentences across United State at the time of the ruling.

Indeed it is not fair to execute children under the age of seventeen years since they are very different from adults as they are not responsible. The supreme court decision to ban the death penalty for the under eighteen years of aged convicted with the murder cases is one of the wisest decision the supreme court has ever made since they are very different to adult.

Juveniles cannot be treated the same way as adults as they are not responsible enough, they are still minors.

References

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