Capital punishment or death penalty practice overview

Law, Capital Punishment

Capital punishment, interchangeably known as thedeath penalty, is a government-sanctioned practice in which a person is executed as retribution for their offences. Most nations have allowed executions as punishment for various crimes throughout their history, however the amount of nations that abandoned their recognition of the death penalty have steadily grown since the 1800s.

The United States continues to permit capital punishment, although many other developed countries have abolished it entirely. Present nations that recognize this exchange us it only for the worst of crimes, such as mass murder, terrorism, war crimes, and other various acts against humanity. When it comes time for human life to pay for the crime, many people will find themselves facing anethical dilemma.

The economic, legal, and moral consequences of the death penalty remain under scrutiny by many Americans. Discussing capital punishment relies on a handful of core consequences: the publicity of capital punishment and its effectiveness in deterring future crime, the ethical problems surrounding execution, it can send confusing messages, and has an opportunity to be corrupted by racial prejudice.

The first established capital punishment dates as far back as the Eighteenth Century B. C. within the Code of Hammurabi. King Hammurabi listed penalties punishable by death for twenty-five different crimes, which were given easily for thieving, illegal purchases, kidnapping, assisting slaves, disorderly conduct, rape, seduction, and more.

The death penalty was also included in the Fourteenth Century B. C.'s Hittite Code, the Seventh Century B. C.'s Draconian Code, and the Fifth Century B. C.'s Roman Law of the Twelve Tablets. These sentences were often delivered by crucifixion, drowning, beating, burning, or impalement.

The government ordered sentences were later performed in societies such as ancient Asia, Babylon, and Greece. In these civilizations, the death penalty was applied to theft, damage of property, and anything thought to be magic or witchcraft. In the Tenth Century A. D., hanging became normalized as the preferred method of execution, beginning in Britain. In the coming century, William the Conqueror abolished hanging, as well as all capital punishment, unless his country was at war. However, during the Sixteenth Century, as many as 72, 000 people are estimated to have been executed under King Henry VIII's reign.

Boiling, burning at the stake, beheading, and drawing and quartering were all popular methods of execution. Offenses worthy of death included treason, marrying a Jew, or not confessing to a crime. Crime rate continued to rise in Britain throughout the coming two centuries, and by the 1700s, there were over 200 offenses considered punishable by death. Because death was so severe, juries would often not convict defendants if their crime appeared petty, which led Britain towards the first reformation of their capital punishments. From 1823 to 1837, the death penalty was canceled for over 100 crimes previously punishable by death.

American colonies were not immune to the spread of capital punishment. Their first execution began in Virginia in 1608 when George Kendall was accused of espionage and subsequently sentenced to death by firing squad. By 1612, more colonies approved execution as proper punishment for a myriad of crimes. Executions were conducted by hanging or firing squad and, in an effort to increase deterrence, were attended by the public.

Movements opposing capital punishment sprouted in the form of grass-roots organizations, and used many techniques that remain relevant to modern day, such as public meetings and petitions. During the eighteenth century's " Age of Enlightenment", many philosophers criticized capital punishment. This new way of thinking affected the American colonies, contributing to the first legal debates. Leaders such as Thomas Jefferson recommended capital punishment to be used only in response to crimes as evil as murder. Starting in 1794, the Pennsylvania legislature centered capital punishment around murder in the first degree.

Thus began the categorization of murder, ranging from premeditated murder to involuntary murder and manslaughter. By 1849, fifteen states had passed laws providing for private executions. These executions, however, remained opposed by some abolitionists and even by some pro-death penalty advocates. Abolitionists did not want private executions on the grounds that state actions and the legal process must be a matter of public record, and pro-death penalty advocates feared private executions would taint the deterrence effect of public executions.

By 1846, Michigan would prove to be the first state to entirely rid the death penalty from its law, influencing Rhode Island and Wisconsin to abolish capital punishment over a matter of seven years. Various methods of capital punishment were being thought outdated and inhumane, such as public hangings, leaving new means of execution open for design. Electrocution was adopted first by New York in 1888, followed shortly by several other states. In 1924, Nevada began using cyanide gas in executions, with gas chambers soon becoming the most common execution method in the United States.