

Good death penalty in america essay example

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Contemporary American society currently faces a number of truly divisive issues regarding personal freedoms and liberties. These debates hold such a sway in society that they often become the deciding factors in political contests of all levels. Consequently, the topics themselves, such as abortion, gay marriage, gun control, and healthcare, are well known to the average person, even if all the facts concerning them are not. However, of these issues, perhaps the most important is the legality of the death penalty as constitutional form of punishment. This extra form of retribution should not be continued in the United States because it steals the basic human dignity of life, encourages a punitive attitude in the issue of sentencing, and alienates the United States from a majority of the world.

One of the death penalty's largest infringements on human rights is based on the very inalienable right to life. As stated by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, " We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain, unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men." Not only does this passage establish the right to life as an essential part of the American identity, but it also bolsters the claim in the government. Consequently, the government, which is created to defend basic human rights, should not be the very entity that strips these rights from its citizens. Furthermore, the use of the death penalty goes to the heart of these sentiments, a concept understood as dignity. Dignity creates worth in a person and thus through execution, one commits the ultimate act of indignity, or the removal of dignity (Knowles, 2011, p. 119). This thought

process, which is often used in court decisions, thus condemns death as a deprivation of precisely what gives life its worth. By being a measure of the government, the death penalty ultimately denies this right and totally devalues the very people which it is bound and was created to protect. Beyond this violation of rights, the continuation of the death penalty also promotes a negative attitude towards the penal system. For example, support for the death penalty often resonates in groups which have a higher punitive mindset, such as in whites, conservatives, the less educated, and men (Unnever, 2010, p. 465). Some of these groups, such as conservatives and men are often associated with more aggressive mindset, which could explain this tendency to support punishment over mediation. As subsections of society, these individual groups do not indicate an overall problem or tendency. However, when combined these represent a growing mindset towards punishment, particularly if incensed. By leaving capital punishment and the death penalty as viable options, the system encourages the support of these routes and a mindset towards the acceptance of punishment. If these options were eliminated, perhaps then solutions such as rehabilitation could become more widespread and create a change many popular attitudes.

Finally, the current legal acceptance of the death penalty separates the United States from a majority of the world, including many of its allies in Western Europe. By the 1990s, over two-thirds of the countries of the world had abolished the death penalty, including most of the countries in Africa and Western Europe (Unnever, 2010, p. 464). Not only does this place the nation in the minority of opinion politically, but it also places the power in

opposition to many of its allies, which are in Western Europe. Thus the United States is dangerously in opposition to many powers on a basic human issue. Given the tendency of nations to support protestors in foreign nations, this could potentially lead to political percussions down the road when the nation is in the middle of a crisis. Additionally, developing international law may also force the abolishment of capital punishment through an emphasis on world order, in order to sway common opinion (Unnever, 2010, p. 264). Thus by proceeding to abolish the penalty independently, the United States stays ahead of the political trend across the nation. By doing so, they would not be lumped with countries such as China, Afghanistan, and North Korea which currently support the death penalty and are viewed negatively in the global political consensus.

The perpetuation of the death penalty in the United States creates a number of long term fundamental problems. Not only does this policy directly contradict a founding principle of the nation, but it also contradicts growing international opinion towards the abolishment of capital punishment. Additionally, it further hurts the nation by permitting and emphasizing a punitive attitude towards crime and punishment. Thus, by continuing the legalization of the death penalty through legislation and judicial decisions, the government ultimately harms itself and the citizens which it is bound to protect. Only by reversing these attitudes can the United States work to improve many situations before they become even greater and ultimately, fatal.

Bibliography

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