

The body's vital
organs, heart, central
nervous system,



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The Death Penalty vs. Alternative Punishments

In the United States Constitution, the 8th Amendment prohibits the use and practices of cruel and unusual punishment. What exactly is considered to be cruel and unusual punishment? This question is a hot topic among America's many different current controversies.

Many people are saying that the use of capital punishment (to be sentenced to death as a penalty in the eyes of the law a capital crime. An execution capital punishment) is a direct violation of the 8th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (Capital Punishment). They say there should be another way to deal with these criminals other than having them executed. The purpose of this paper is to give a brief history of the death penalty and state some alternative forms of punishment along with opposing viewpoints. As to which one is right, that's up to you to decide.

Capital punishment has been a part of our government since the seventeenth century (The Death Penalty in America). The criminal law that we had here was just a variation colony by colony, on the law of England. Although the capital law of the thirteen colonies differed from one another, many interesting and important details concerning the death penalty and various other things occurred during the century and a half of the colonial period. All of the colonies authorized public executions by hanging as the mandatory punishment for various crimes against the state, the person, and the property (The Death Penalty in America). In the early nineteenth century, English criminal law imposed the death penalty for a wide range of crimes from murder, treason, rape, to such stupid things as petty theft. Of all of the

nonhomocidal crimes particularly by death, rape was by far the most numerous.

Some ten percent of all executions carried out between 1930 and 1977 were for rape. Those who opted to keep the death penalty did so because they thought that it would act as a discouragement for would be criminals and to keep the community safe. In theory it seemed clear-cut, but does it work? America has had more violent crimes this century than in any other time in its history. The only real point that both sides can agree upon is that the death penalty stops the convicted murder from ever killing again. Some say that this reason is enough to keep the death penalty. There are currently five different ways to carry out the death penalty in the United States. The first is death by firing squad. Death occurs because of massive damage to the body's vital organs, heart, central nervous system, or by a combination of these different effects with hemorrhage (The Execution Protocol).

Probably the quickest way to execute a human being with a gun is to fire a single bullet from a piston at point blank range into the head. Yet in Idaho and Utah, the law specifies a five-man rifle squad. Execution by firing squad has a long history in America. The first recorded execution by firing squad was in 1608, when George Kendall, one of the original councilors in the colony of Virginia was put to death (The Execution Protocol). People opposed to the death penalty say that being shot to death is a form of cruel and unusual punishment. There have been cases where the marksmen have missed the shot and it has taken a man over an hour to die from his wounds.

Another problem with this form of execution is that some members of the firing squad have been known to aim away from the man's heart, shooting him where it would take longer to die. This happened on September 10, 1951, in the execution of Elisio Mares. During his execution, all five of the marksmen aimed away from the target over Mares heart and shot him on the right side of his chest.

The firing squad and witnesses watched in horror as Mares slowly bled to death (The Execution Protocol). When Gary Gilmore was shot to death in Utah in 1973, all four bullets pierced his heart. However, heart death was not immediate, and the doctor had to check twice before pronouncing him dead, two minutes after the