

Is the death penalty ethical, or even practical?

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How much does society really know or understand about the complications of the death penalty? Many people in our country today simply view the death penalty as a security blanket; they feel safe because of the option of death row, even if they don't really know much about what it entails. The American public knows very little about the process of executing a death row inmate. Surprisingly to most Americans, the death penalty is millions of dollars more expensive than keeping an inmate in prison for life without parole. This is millions of dollars going down the drain in this recession, because of all the very slow appeals, the wait from the conviction to the actual execution can be as long as twenty years.

It is simply a waste of money and just draws out the process of grief for the families of the victims and the criminals. The death penalty is not only unethical, but also very impractical. It just doesn't make sense. One of the main reasons capital punishment is still in practice is because of the effectiveness of deterring crime. However, there is very little evidence to support this and even research to disprove this theory.

Hugo Bedau, a professor at Tufts University, reviewed research on the "special protection allegedly afforded to police officers by the death penalty". Those who carried on the investigation found that there is "no evidence that either the statutory provision for capital punishment, or its actual level of use, provided an effective deterrent to police killings". This theory of capital punishment deterring crime can also backfire, in what is known as the "brutalization hypothesis" which is argued by William J. Bowers and Glenn L. Pierce.

This theory states that capital punishment could actually raise the number of homicides by legitimizing or modeling killing, showing that is acceptable to kill someone in certain circumstances. Being accused of a crime you didn't commit is one of the worst injustices that can happen to a person, especially if that crime is as horrible as arson and murdering your children. This is what Cameron Todd Willingham was accused of in 1991. A fire started in his home and he was able to escape, while his two young girls tragically died. The case had very little evidence, mostly based on the police inspections after the fire. They determined that the fire had been started by some sort of liquid accelerant and could therefore not be an accident.

They found him to be guilty and they executed a man based on this paper thin evidence. That is what makes me question our justice system and the death penalty. Even if he was guilty, there was nowhere near enough to prove it. In 2009, according to a new report by an expert hired by the Texas Forensic Science Commission, the fire may have been an accident. Everyone is subject to human error, which is why we can never be 100% sure that anyone executed is guilty.

Although I suppose that some think capital punishment can be a form of deterring crime, that doesn't change the fact that it is morally wrong. In my opinion, no person (or state) has the right to take another's life. Yes, you may say the criminal killed an innocent person first, but what does it really help to kill him then? Is there any way this brings back the victim's life? Is retribution really the answer to dealing with the punishment of murder? What are the advantages of capital punishment when there is always the risk of executing an innocent person? Keeping inmates in prison for life without

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the possibility of parole is a better way to punish such heinous crimes as are usually considered to be deserving of a death penalty. Ultimately, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages of capital punishment. The death penalty is immoral, unethical, and simply impractical form of punishment for crime.