
The Issues of Death Penalties and Social Justice in the United States

Death Penalties and Social Justice

Death penalties, also known as capital punishments, are a type of punishment that have been used throughout history to ensure the prevention of further attempted crimes from the convicted criminals. This type of punishment is used for murder and other crimes of similar grievance, and because of the severity of this penalty, there have been various arguments that both support and disagree with the death sentence method, which are both heavily supported and analyzed by educated professionals on the subject. Nonetheless, although the motives for convicting a person for a death sentence may be supported by understandable reasoning, the ulterior motives and consequences of ending the life of a person are not as understandable and humane. There is no crime grave enough to force a person to end the life of another, as every single human being is granted the right of life from the moment they exist as a person.

Various documents have been written to advocate human rights in a country, including those that are found on important files such as the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. In these documents there are Amendments found, which state the diverse rights that the citizens of the country carry with them. For instance, the 8th Amendment establishes that punishments cannot be cruel and have to be fair. Continuously, the 14th Amendment states that "a state must treat an individual in the same manner as others in similar conditions and circumstances." Furthermore, the 5th Amendment clearly establishes that "No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury ; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." Death penalties violate these laws because the sanction of depriving someone from the life, is understated to be cruel, unnecessary and unfair. As Karge Stewart debates in the article Capital Punishment: Death for Murder Only, "There is no purpose to inflict unnecessary pain nor any unnecessary pain involved in the proposed execution. We cannot agree that the hardship imposed upon the petitioner rises to that level of hardship denounced as denial of due process because of cruelties."

Furthermore, even though some take upon themselves to excuse death penalties with the rationalization that death sentences reduce crimes such as murders, there is no actual evidence that supports that argument. As a matter of fact, E. H. Sutherland examines this correlation in his paper Murder and the Death Penalty, where he analyzes how death penalty is still used as a

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punishment in England and the Southern States, and that even though the homicide rate is low in England, it is high in the Southern states. So we can conclude that “there is no proof of casual connection in either case.” He also argues that “The homicide rate is almost exactly twice as high in the states that have abolished the death penalty as in those that have retained the death penalty” (Sutherland, 526). So he guides us to the conclusion that there is no “evidence” of an actual relationship “between the murder rate and the possibility or practice of using the death penalty as a punishment for murder. As it cannot be demonstrated” (Sutherland, 528).

Arguments in favor of death sentences may debate that this sanction is necessary in order to grant families the feeling of closure after the parting of their loved ones, but a study made by Dahlia Lithwick on the families affected by the 9/11 terrorists attack, proved that executing criminals only slows down the healing process of the person as passing a death penalty can take years to complete. Additionally, families genuinely only seek answers from the offenders as acting out in revenge will not aid bring their loved ones back.

Death penalties should not be appointed no matter how many arguments support the reasoning behind them, there are laws, human rights, and diverse evidence that prevent and warn us against them. Executing another person only creates a cycle of vengeance and death where if all of the rationalities and political structures are dropped, the facts presented at the end of the day is that a man is killed because he killed another man, so when does it end? Human life is to be respected and appreciated, not thrown away as if it holds no meaningful value.

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