

Six Facts about the Death Penalty

Fact #1: The death penalty is not a deterrent to murder.

Recent studies have found that 84% of criminologists surveyed and a majority of Police Chiefs believe that the death penalty is not effective at deterring crimes. Other studies have even found that the death penalty adds to the violent nature of society and increases the murder rates.

Fact #2: The death penalty is not reserved for the worst criminals regardless of their race or class.

Fact: The death penalty is severely biased based on race and income. Blacks represent 47% of the murder victims nationally, but since 1976 only 14% of the people executed were convicted of killing a black. Moreover, money buys a good attorney. Supreme Court, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said that she has yet to see a death penalty “in which the defendant was well represented at trial.” Clearly, it is the poor that are sitting on death row.

Fact #3: Victims’ families don’t all want the death penalty

While some victims’ families call for vengeance, many others believe that no human being has the right to take the life of another. Coretta Scott King, widow of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., says, “I refuse to accept the cynical notion that their killer deserves the death penalty.”

Fact #4: The Bible does not call for the death sentence when it says “an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.”

The Hebrew text, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” was a limitation on mass killings among clans out of vindication and it was used only when two witnesses had seen the murder taking place. In the New Testament, Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person...Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” It is no surprise then, that many denominations from the Catholic Church to the American Baptists are opposed to the death penalty.

Fact #5: The death penalty costs more than life in prison

Because of legal costs, capital punishment is a huge drain on state and county resources. A 1992 study found that the cost of executing a criminal in Texas was 2.5 times more expensive than putting the criminal in prison for life.

Fact #6: Executions are not common internationally.

The death penalty has been abolished across Europe and many other countries. If we judge ourselves by the company we keep, it is not a pretty picture. Only China, Iran, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia, some of the worst violators of human rights in the world, executed more people than the *state* of Texas in 2004.

Are you surprised by what you read on the other side of this paper?

Are you amazed to learn that much of what we believe about the death penalty is myth and is not supported by the facts? You are not alone. Many people support the death penalty on the mistaken belief that it is just, fair and morally accepted. The truth is, **the death penalty is a failed policy** that does not lead to a safer society but instead degrades society, wastes precious government resources, and is morally bankrupt.

But don't believe us. Look into the facts yourself. We're sure that you will come to the same conclusion as these prominent thinkers: that **the death penalty has serious flaws**

Conservative Columnist George F. Will:

(commenting on a book by Barry Scheck, Peter Neufeld and Jim Dwyer)

“Capital punishment, like the rest of the criminal justice system, is a government program, so skepticism is in order. ... Their cumulative weight compels the conclusion that many innocent people are in prison, and **some innocent people have been executed.**”

Rev. Pat Robertson:

“I think a [death penalty] moratorium would indeed be very appropriate.”

Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor:

“If statistics are any indication, the system **may well be allowing some innocent defendants to be executed**”

What can you do?

- ✓ ***Get more information***
A great source to start your search is The Death Penalty Information Center:
<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org>
- ✓ ***Contact your legislators and tell them it's time to base policy on facts not myths***
For contact information for your legislators (<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/fyi/fyi.htm>)
- ✓ ***Support death penalty reform nationally and in Texas***
Join the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (<http://www.tcadp.org>)
Support The Moratorium Campaign (<http://www.moratoriumcampaign.org>)
Join the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (<http://www.ncadp.org/>)
- ✓ ***Get involved locally***
Contact info@tcadp-bv.org for more information or visit our web site at
<http://tcadp-bv.org>.