Your Name

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Title: Capital Punishment

One of the government-sanctioned practices in which a person is put to death for committing a crime, is called capital punishment or the death penalty. The death penalty is the ultimate denial of the right to life, it is considered hypocritical and often declared as having no sense of morality. In many parts of the world, that have the death penalty, abolishment movements have been carried out, emphasizing that the death penalty must be substituted by life imprisonment without parole (Schabas and Schabas). Capital Punishment is the provision for the rarest of rare crime. Capital Punishment is not the means to get justice done, according to many experts. However, to create fear in the minds of people, this punishment is awarded. This punishment is also awarded to meet the grave injustice done by the act(s) of the offender.

**Death Penalty in the US**

The United States of America is a nation made up of 50 states, a Commonwealth, and three territories. Each state entity runs its criminal justice system, and they are each slightly different. Some states, through their normal legislative process, have decided that the death penalty is not a wise public policy, and have passed laws abolishing the penalty (Lilly). Illinois is one of those states; other states profoundly disagree with this position, holding that “the punishment should fit the crime" in order to fulfil the demands of justice. Currently, the death penalty is legal in most of the U.S., in the military and in the federal government. The existence of the death penalty in American can be traced back to the beginning of colonization. Amid many developed nations, the US is the only one imposing the death penalty on a regular basis.

There is a federal death penalty for certain crimes, such as assassinating a federal officer or committing an act of terrorism, that results in death. And of course, the death penalty is available for treason, but treason prosecutions have been rare in the U.S.’s history. At the state level (which is where most serious crimes are prosecuted), the death penalty is available in some states and not in others. I believe that in all states that have the death penalty, the underlying crime has to involve the death of another human being, to be eligible for the death penalty. In my state (Texas), the death penalty does exist, and I live in a county that has sent the most inmates ~~to~~ on death row (the prison where all inmates sentenced to death are held before their sentence is executed).

**History of Death Penalty within Iowa**

Iowa is a state, bordered by six other states comprising of Missouri to the south, Minnesota to the north, Wisconsin to the northeast, South Dakota to northwest Illinois to the east and southeast, and Nebraska to the west. It is known for its agricultural production and comes at top after Texas and California and is the number one producer of soybeans and corn. It is also considered as one of the safe places to live (“Iowa”).

The state of Iowa carried out 46 executions between the years 1834 and 1965. 43 of these executions were due to murder, while 3 were due to committing rape. All of those executed, were men. Some of the cases were very notable and prominent, for instance, two brothers William and Steven Hodges, both were hanged on July 15th, 1845 for committing murder (“Iowa”). Both of them were Mormon and blamed the verdicts on the anti-Mormon bbias. In 1858, another significant cause behind the hanging of William Hinkle, which resulted in gathering of more than 15,000 people. It was declared as one of the biggest congregation by the Ottumwa Courier for any event west of Mississippi (“Iowa”). The death penalty is abolished in the State of Iowa since 1965. There were many milestones in the declaration of death penalty, as illegal in the state of Iowa. The following paragraph is about the milestones in the abolishment of the death penalty.

**Major Abolition/Reinstatement Milestones**

Since 1872, the original death penalty statue of Iowa remained active. The first death penalty abolishment legislation was signed by Governor Cyrus Carpenter, after he was encouraged by active, anti-capital punishment Quaker and the Unitarian population. However, a wave of crime swept over the state and the national economic depression did not let the legislation last longer. The outcome of this legislation was groups began taking into their hands what they saw as justice, hanging several convicted or accused defendants in the next years of the abolishment of the death penalty. These killings were blamed mostly on the nonexistence of the death penalty. In 1878, the Iowa legislature again reinstated the death penalty with the aim to bring these lynching’s to an end, and to reduce the level of crimes that were continuously rising in the state.

In the history of the state, 1964 was one of the most successful election years for the democrats. As it advanced the ways for the abolishment of the death penalty bill in the year, 1965. This bill was signed by Governor Harold Hughes; this bill abolished the death penalty for the second time in the Iowa state’s history. Since then, a number of attempts have been made with the aim to restore the bill. However, the seriousness of all these restoration struggles came after numerous cases of sexual assault, kidnapping and other capital crimes. The most prominent case in the year 1994 was the murder of 9 years old Anna Marie Emry. In the 1994 election campaign of Governor Terry Branstad, the restoration of the death penalty was made. However, the recommended measures’ failure to pass both houses of Iowa’s state legislature left the matter in between. The death penalty despite being abolished in the state of Iowa is still applied throughout the US, under the federal law, even in Iowa. A federal court in Sioux City announced the first death sentence, of Dustin Honken and Angela Johnson in 2005 in Iowa, since 1960. Several organizations are working to thwart the reinstatement of capital punishment in the state of Iowa. One such organization is *Iowans Against the Death Penalty (IADP).*

**Iowans Reaction Against IADP**

Iowans Against the Death Penalty (IADP) is a non-sectarian, independent and non- partisan organization striving to prevent the restoration of the death penalty in the state, by means of political activism and programs for educating the general public about the matter. A random newsletter, The Watch, is published by IADP to create awareness. It also participates in active lobbying; sponsors public events all over the state; especially when the death penalty legislation is pending in the Legislature (*Iowans Against the Death Penalty*). The organization was founded in 1962, and it was active in the promotion of abolishing Iowa's death penalty, in 1965. The organization reconstituted itself when the initiatives to restore death penalty legislation rose in Iowa, in 1990. Since then, the organization is striving to bring together the voice of Iowans from different secular and religious traditions

Several statutory proposals to legalize capital punishment have been conquered in 1991, 1995, 1997, and 1998, owing to the effort of this organization. The organization has been allowed tax-exemption in 1990 that could be used on charitable and educational projects. Under section 501(c)(3), the IADPF was granted an indemnity from federal income tax, 1997. The funds also support learning sources related to capital punishment, and these funds also compensated for a certain portion of the newsletter costs of IADP.

**Good & Bad things Related to Death Penalty**

In my opinion, it is both good and bad to award someone capital punishment. Good in a sense, it teaches a lesson to the offender as well as the general people not to commit such offences again (however, it does not deter them from committing such crimes again). It also saves the offender from living such a miserable life (Spending all the days in a cell also kills them bit by bit, it proves to be much severe) (Soss et al.). However, it is not effective in most of the cases (Robinson and Darley). It does not deter certain people from committing such crimes again, so many people received capital punishment but still, those crimes are prevalent. Besides, crimes are bound to happen, as we are nothing more than social animals. Since we do not give life to someone, we don't have the right to take their lives (even if we give, we still don't have any right to do so). It violates natural law philosophy that everyone has the right to live (let God punish them).

The international debate of Iowa death penalty law shows that it is and will remain the most hotly contested topic in American politics (Neumayer). The major determinants of this topic and the arguments in favor or against the debate, are political. Even in the states where capital punishment is abolished, it is considered as a controversial topic. Although, contemporary national polling reveals, there is a split between a preference of life imprisonment and capital punishment. The public support for capital punishment and the use of execution has shown a drop in previous years. Such as in 2014, when only 29 people were given the death penalty, to 98 in 1999 and almost 52 in the year 2009. The states where recent executions have occurred are Texas, Florida, and Missouri. However, states of Oregon, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New Mexico have merely executed death row prisoners who surrendered their pleas after the death penalty was reinstituted in 1976. During this time period, no executions were performed in the states of New Hampshire, Iowa, and Kansas.

**Conclusion**

A number of studies report that the death penalty does not deter crime. It is essentially, only useful to prevent future repeats of a horrific crime or to give the families of victims a sense that justice has been served. It is not cost-effective in the United States because of the appeals process and the length of time from conviction to execution. Where it is useful in negotiating plea deals. Life without parole, as the worst option, means the system has to come under that for a "deal". The death penalty exists and is carried out as an act of revenge. That is a reasonable human desire, even if it doesn't spring from the best part of ourselves, but I suspect it is more satisfying in the planning than in the completion. It also seems like there is no end to the debate of capital punishment, from the past 40 years, even in the states where the death penalty is abolished. The public opinion about the death penalty in Iowa shows that the majority of citizens support it, this support is not very strong, in fact, when it comes to making a choice between the death penalty and imprisonment with no parole chances. Present Iowa law does not allow for a sentence of any crime by death.

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