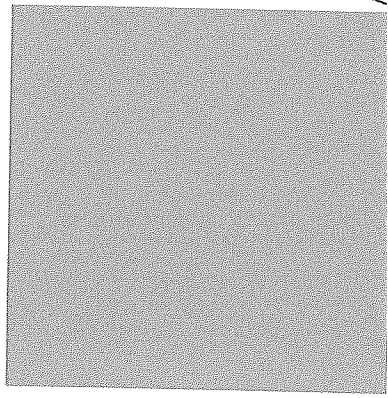
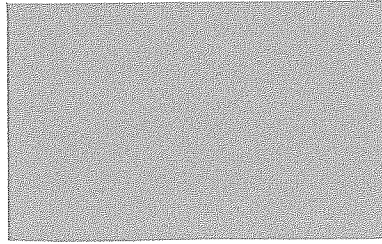


Colin Domonoske



Junior at Claremont High School

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
3/28/10
Period 4

Death Penalty Focus

One of the most crucial decisions our state of California must make is whether or not to eliminate the death penalty in favor of life without parole. Life without parole means that those currently sentenced to death row, and future prisoners, will be given a life sentence with no chance of ever getting out of prison. In support of the cause, some contend that eliminating the death penalty will save lives by stopping repeat murders and future murders. Others argue that the death penalty does not discourage crime and in fact some innocent prisoners have been put to death before their innocence was proven. Three major points in support of eliminating the death penalty are that life without parole is more humane, consistent, and cheaper than the death penalty that California supports today.

Historically, the Death Penalty has existed in California since the Criminal Practices Act of 1851 and in America since colonial times; however, not all American leaders agreed with it, and for a good reason. For example, Benjamin Franklin believed, "that it is better one hundred guilty persons should escape than that one innocent person should suffer." Benjamin Franklin, considered to be one of the founders of America and one who outlined the United States Constitution, opposed capital punishment. The death penalty is unethical because taking a human life, no matter what the circumstances, is wrong. Furthermore the United Nations Human Rights Committee recommends that the United States prohibit executions carried out through the death penalty because it can be challenged as inhumane. Thus, moving away from capital punishment to life sentences without parole is encouraged by the United Nations because a life sentence is the morally correct choice.

In addition to being unethical, the death penalty has proved to be extremely inconsistent. For example several criminal cases have gone incognito and the accused has avoided the death penalty. For example, Gary Ridgeway, who killed at least 48 women, struck a deal to spare his life. Others like Terry Nichols, who was involved in the Oklahoma City bombing and Lee Boyd Malvo, nicknamed the "D.C sniper" both escaped the death sentence for a life sentence. The life sentence was due to astute legal council, which not all accused have access to. Legislation is inconsistent throughout the nation and California. On July 14, 1998 Thomas Martin Thompson was executed, despite evidence showing his innocence, by the state of California. If the death penalty was abolished, sentencing could be applied more consistently and humanely.

A third reason why life without parole is imperative is because it is cheaper than the death penalty. Shockingly, the yearly cost for the state of California to carry out the death penalty is over ten times that of the costs for lifetime incarceration. It is estimated that \$137 million dollars are spent annually to support the death penalty system; in comparison only \$11.5 million dollars which are spent annually to impose the life without parole system. Also, an additional \$90,000 per year per inmate is needed to confine someone to death row than if they were sentenced to a life sentence. Besides, with the current financial crisis California faces today, it is vital to save and be smarter with our money. Clearly life without parole is financially prudent when compared to the current death penalty system.

In conclusion, eradicating the death penalty and changing to life sentences without parole makes sense. America prides itself on protecting human rights and criticizes other countries for their poor human rights' records. We need to continue to serve as an international example, and abolish the death penalty. If that were the case, justice can be served more fairly and justly, at a lower cost to tax payers.