

Injustice On Death Row

By Luke Schnell

In 1985, Anthony Ray Hinton was put on death row in Alabama for a crime he didn't commit. He was convicted for killing two fast-food managers. He served 28 years before being proven innocent in a retrial. Mr. Hinton knew he was innocent but nobody would believe him. Imagine being put on death row at age 29. I am 13 years old, and I feel like I have been on this earth for a long time. Hinton was on death row for thirty years, which must have felt like an eternity. He made friends in death row but sooner or later they were gone. One of them was sentenced to death by the electric chair and the other was exonerated after being on death row for six years.

The death penalty has existed in America since before the Constitution. Over time the death penalty has changed from being implemented nationwide to only being enacted by certain states. Currently, the death penalty is legal in 29 states and illegal in 21¹. Since 1982 (the year lethal injection was first used), the average number of executions in the United States has been 46 per year². There are currently 2,673 inmates on death row nationwide.³ Between 1973 and 2015, 152 inmates have been exonerated from death row and an estimated 4% of death row inmates are innocent.⁴ An average death penalty case will cost the state 1.12 million dollars more than a general population inmate⁵. Health care on death row costs more because, on average, inmates are on death row for 20 years so people get sick because they are getting old. Staffing also costs more because death row contains some of the worst criminals so they need high security. There are many appeals that are made by soon to be inmates and inmates that cost a lot of money for the jury and the judges. It also costs a lot of money because the price of buying the injection for lethal injection and the execution is expensive.

Studies have shown that the death penalty is not more of a deterrent than life in prison.⁶ I believe that life in prison is a fairer sentence than death. A death sentence can never be reversed so if the person is innocent and is killed, no justice can be served. Keeping a prisoner on death row is way more expensive than keeping them in the general population. We are taking taxpayers' money and putting it into something we don't need. The death penalty contradicts the purpose of jail as rehabilitation and we need to end it.

¹ "States with the Death Penalty and States with Death Penalty"

<https://deathpenalty.procon.org/states-with-the-death-penalty-and-states-with-death-penalty-bans/>. Accessed 23 Feb. 2020.

² "Death Penalty Statistics - Criminal Law - FindLaw."

<https://criminal.findlaw.com/criminal-procedure/recent-death-penalty-statistics.html>. Accessed 23 Feb. 2020.

³ ""Death Row USA" | Death Penalty Information Center."

<https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/death-row/overview/death-row-usa>. Accessed 23 Feb. 2020.

⁴ "Opinion | 152 Innocents, Marked for Death - The New York" 13 Apr. 2015,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/13/opinion/152-innocents-marked-for-death.html>. Accessed 23 Feb. 2020.

⁵ "Comparing the Costs of Death Penalty vs. Life in Prison."

<https://www.thebalance.com/comparing-the-costs-of-death-penalty-vs-life-in-prison-4689874>. Accessed 23 Feb. 2020.

⁶ "A Clear Scientific Consensus that the Death"

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/a-clear-scientific-consensus-that-the-death-penalty-does-not-deter/>. Accessed 23 Feb. 2020.