The Death Penalty: Reasons for Abolishing the Death Penalty
Anilla Ramnarine, Andrew Edmonds, and John Ford

Introduction
The Death Penalty is an unjust act toward perpetrators and victims as well. Using the death penalty sends the wrong message to citizens. This includes victims as well. We are a society which teaches that killing is a deviant and barbaric act. By promoting the death penalty, we are saying that it is okay to kill a person if they killed someone else. Murder is illegal wherever it is in the United States. Using the death penalty is murder. By having the death penalty as a punishment, the states, by utilizing it, are violating a fundamental law set forth by our federal government, namely, that murder is a felonious crime. The states shouldn’t break a law that they are enforcing. Furthermore, the death penalty should be banned for reasons of cost and its not having a deterrent effect.

Costs
A case in which the prosecution seeks the death penalty lasts much longer than one in which life without parole is sought. Therefore, the cost to the courts and to the correctional facilities is much greater.

- The cost far out ways the benefits. While some would argue that the cost of the drugs for lethal injection or for the energy for the electric chair are relatively low, this does not account for the real cost.
- According to the New York Times article High Cost of Death Row in the state of California, one of the thirty two states in which the death penalty is still legal, it costs the tax payers one hundred and fourteen million dollars a year more for death penalty prisoners than those imprisoned for life.
- According to Earl Smith and Angela J Hattery, the authors of Race, Wrongful Conviction & Exoneration, as of January of 2010, the United States has had approximately 250 exonerations.
- Amongst these people, most have spent thirteen years in prison for crimes they have not committed. Along with being imprisoned, about six percent of the incarcerated population is actually innocent.
- According to their study, the same factors that lead up to wrongful convictions are also present in executions.
- Samuel R. Gross, Barbara O’Brien, Hu Chen, and Edward H. Kennedy, wrote in their recent article, Rate of False Conviction of criminal defendants who are sentenced to death, “there is no systematic method to determine the accuracy of criminal conviction; if there were, these errors would not occur in the first place.
- If all these defendants remain with this sentence, 4.1% will be exonerated. The percentage is pretty small but that is not to say there cannot be more innocent cases.
- The death penalty should leave no room for mistakes. Nevertheless, there are convictions of innocent people, the majority of whose cases are never retried by the courts.

The Cost of Capital Cases

![The Cost of Capital Cases](image)

![Murder Rates](image)

No Evidence For Deterrent
- In 2004, there were 16,137 homicides, but only 125 death sentences. Of the 3,314 prisoners on death row, only 59 were executed. Capital punishment is an inconsistent and timely process. This makes it seem remote and surreal to the convicted.
- Estimated lives saved per execution from 1934 to 2000: range from -1.0 to -1.7. Death sentencing is not proved to deter murder and save lives.
- 1990-94: Wisconsin and Iowa (abolitionist states) had half the murder rate of Illinois (Death Penalty state). 1992-95: 84% of inmate homicides were in Death Penalty jurisdictions.
- According to FBI statistics, murder rates per 100,000 have been higher in death-penalty states than in abolitionist states from 1990 to 2010.
- There is an Ignorance of the underlying factors of criminal homicide. The threat of a future execution is unlikely to enter the minds of offenders influenced by drugs or alcohol, those in the grip of fear or anger, criminals in a panic while committing another crime, or offenders who are mentally ill.

Wrongful Convictions
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Conclusion
- The Death Penalty is an antiquated form of punishment.
- Its astronomical cost and risk of irreversible wrongful conviction make it an unsustainable and unethical type of sentencing. Furthermore, the fact that it has done little to deter criminals makes it an ineffective form of punishment.
- Eighteen states have already done away with the death penalty and it is time for the rest of the country to follow suit before more money is wasted or, more importantly, before more innocent people are killed for crimes they did not commit.

References