



Myths & Facts

Myth #1 Executions deter others from killing.

FACT:

- Fifty years of scholarly research has produced over 100 studies scrutinizing the issue from every conceivable perspective. Critical review of these studies finds no credible evidence of deterrence.
- Texas, which executes more prisoners than any other state, consistently records a murder rate among the nation's highest. If deterrence worked, Texas should have the nation's lowest murder rate.
- The 15 states that have abolished the death penalty consistently record the lowest murder rates.
- A few studies have shown that when an execution occurs, the murder rate actually increases for about 30 days following the event, then eases back to "normal" suggesting that violence begets violence.

Myth #2 Executions are the only sure way to protect our families and communities.

FACT:

- We have an alternative to the death penalty which protects society and offers swift and certain justice to victims' families: permanent imprisonment.
- No guilty person who has received this sentence has ever been released in California.

Myth #3 Executions save taxpayers money.

FACT:

- Capital punishment is vastly more expensive than the alternative life in prison without the possibility of parole.
- On average, capital trials in California cost \$1.1 million more than non-capital murder trials. These costs are borne by the county.

Myth #4 Executions are the only way to ease the suffering of the victim's family and afford them a true sense of closure.

FACT:

- The extensive financial and staff resources that are used to pursue the execution of just a handful of murderers could better be used to help all murder victims' families by providing them with grief counseling and other forms of assistance.
- Only one in 100 murderers receives the death penalty. If the death penalty was required for closure, then what message would we be sending to the 99% of victims' families in which the death penalty is not sought for their loved one's killer?
- Sister Helen Prejean, author of the book "Dead Man Walking," reports that families clamoring for execution spend years consumed by hatred and anger which does not dissipate after the condemned man or woman is finally executed. On the other hand, for thousands of survivor families who pursue reconciliation and forgiveness, the wounds of tragedy can slowly heal as they affirmatively try to pull their lives back together.
- In the words of Judy Kerr, whose brother was murdered, "My grief is raw and unremitting. But I am absolute in my conviction that another death will not serve me. Justice through execution is not the justice I need and it is not the justice I want in my country or my world. I have never and will never support the death penalty."

Myth #5 Cases of innocent persons being sent to death row are so rare as to be insignificant.

FACT:

- Since 1973, 130 men and women have been released from death row because of wrongful conviction.
- This figure means that one death row inmate has been exonerated for every nine prisoners that have been executed during that same period.
- Human beings are fallible and cannot realistically be expected to make infallible judgments. Mistakes can never be entirely eliminated.

Myth #6 Religious teachings support the death penalty.

FACT:

- The majority of religious denominations in the United States oppose the use of capital punishment. These include the following denominations: the Roman Catholic Church, the United Methodist Church, major movements of American Judaism, including: the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist denominations, the United Church of Christ, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Orthodox Church of America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the American Baptist Churches, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), among many others.



For more information or to support our work, go to:

www.CaliforniaPeopleofFaith.org

A 501(c)(3) Non Profit Organization