

CALIFORNIA'S DEATH PENALTY



**CATHOLIC
MOBILIZING
NETWORK**

ENDING THE DEATH PENALTY.
PROMOTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

The Facts

- 743 people currently on death row
- 13 executions since 1976
- 709 executions before 1976
- Jury decides the sentence
- Life without parole is a sentencing option
- Method of execution: gas or lethal injection
- 3 innocent persons released from death row

Moratorium

On Wednesday, March 13, 2019, California Governor Gavin Newsom made a historic step forward in the death penalty abolition movement by declaring a moratorium on all California executions. "The intentional killing of another person is wrong.

And as Governor, I will not oversee the execution of any individual" stated the new governor during Wednesday morning's press conference. The implications of shutting down the largest death row in the Western Hemisphere are great.

The moratorium will grant a reprieve for the 737 men and women currently sitting on California's death row, including the 24 people who have exhausted all their appeals and were most at risk for imminent execution. In addition to making the tenure of the governor's time in office execution-free, the moratorium will also dismantle and close the execution chamber in San Quentin and withdraw California's lethal injection protocol.

California Bishops Stand Against Capital Punishment

"In November - the concluding month of the Year of Mercy - Californians have the opportunity to embrace both justice and mercy (cf. Ps. 85.11) in their voting. We strongly urge all voters to prayerfully consider support for Proposition 62 and opposition to Proposition 66." - California Bishops, July 14, 2016

The California Catholic Conference actively works on death penalty legislation as part of their mission to uphold the dignity of life.

Visit their website to learn more:
<http://www.cacatholic.org>

RACIAL BIAS

A study found white jurors were more likely to recommend a death sentence for Latino defendants than for white defendants in California.

Researchers gave case descriptions to 500 people, who had reported for jury duty in southern California. The jurors were asked to choose a sentence of life without parole or death. The cases were based on a real capital case, and the researchers simply altered the race in the description. White jurors recommended a death sentence about half the time for Latino defendants who were poor, but only one-third of the time for poor white defendants.

LARGEST DEATH ROW

California has the country's largest death row population. There are over 700 people awaiting execution at San Quentin State Prison and Central California Women's Facility.

DEATH PENALTY COST

Taxpayers have spent more than \$4 billion on capital punishment in California since it was reinstated in 1978.

The Church and State Speak

The Church Speaks

Catechism of the Catholic Church

"The Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person",[1] and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide." (CCC 2267)

Evangelium Vitae

Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical on human dignity, challenges us to be "unconditionally pro-life.": "The case of someone who has done great evil. Modern society has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform." (*Evangelium Vitae*, 27)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

"Its [the death penalty] application is deeply flawed and can be irreversibly wrong, is prone to errors and is biased by factors such as race, the quality of legal representation and where the crime was committed." (*A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*, USCCB, 2005)

Words of the Popes

Pope Francis: "Rendering justice' does not mean seeking punishment for its own sake, but ensuring that the basic purpose of all punishment is the rehabilitation of the offender." *World Congress Against the Death Penalty*, June 22, 2016

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: "Society's leaders should make every effort to eliminate the death penalty and to reform the penal system in a way that ensures respect for the prisoners' human dignity." *Benin, Africa*, Nov. 19, 2011

The States Speak

Innocence

- Nationally, over 160 people have been exonerated from death row.
- For every nine executions carried out in the United States, one person has been found to be innocent.

Racial Bias

- 76% of death row defendants have been executed for killing white victims, even though African--Americans make up about half of all homicide victims.
- African-Americans are overrepresented on death row. They makeup 13% of the US population but constitute 42% of death row.

Criminalization of Mental Illness and Intellectual Disabilities

- A study in the *Hastings Law Journal* of recent executions found that "over half of the last one hundred executed offenders have been diagnosed with or displayed symptoms of mental illness."
- The Supreme Court banned the execution of those with intellectual disabilities but states have significantly deviated from accepted clinical methods for determining intellectual disability.

Overrepresentation of the Poor

- The majority of individuals on death row could not afford their own attorney. In many cases, the appointed attorneys are overworked , underpaid, or lacking the trial experience required for death penalty cases.

Costly Public Policy

- Multiple studies have shown the cost of trial sentencing, appeals and imprisonment to be much higher in capital cases versus life in prison without parole.

Geographic Basis

- 2% of all U.S. counties have produced 56% of the U.S. death row population



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