

NEVADA'S DEATH PENALTY



**CATHOLIC
MOBILIZING
NETWORK**

ENDING THE DEATH PENALTY.
PROMOTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

The Facts

- 76 people currently on death row
- 12 executions since 1976
- 61 executions before 1976
- Jury decides the sentence
- Life without parole is a sentencing option
- Method of execution is lethal injection
- 1 person released from death row based on evidence of innocence
- 1 person has been granted clemency

Gas Chamber

In 1924, Nevada became the first state to use the gas chamber to execute inmates. Nevada's first gas chamber execution was for Gee Jon. Nevada first tried to pump cyanide gas into Jon's cell while he slept. However, when this proved impossible, the gas chamber was constructed.

Nevada's Bishop Stands Against Capital Punishment

In 1998, Bishop Phillip F. Straling of the Diocese of Reno issued a statement condemning the death penalty, as the state prepared for the execution of a 25-year-old man. Bishop Straling said the death penalty is "not the solution," and "Life without the possibility of parole is an option that is more humane, morally acceptable, and equally effective in protecting society...As the level of violence has increased so has the Church's awareness deepened that if life is sacred, it is sacred on every level of conception to natural death...All life is to be valued and even the state, which has an obligation to protect its citizen, should not use violence to achieve this end when other options are available.

For more resources:

Nevada Catholic Conference:

renodiocese.org/nevada-catholic-conference

Nevada Coalition Against the Death Penalty: www.nvcapd.org

NEVADA'S EXONEREE

After spending 14 years on death row, Roberto Miranda was released. At Miranda's trial, he was represented by an attorney who, with one year's experience, inherited the case when the former defense attorney died. When Clark County Senior District Judge Norman Robinson overturned the conviction, he wrote: "The lack of pretrial preparation by trial counsel...cannot be justified."

MURDER VICTIMS' FAMILY MEMBERS

The death penalty does not bring loved ones back and any "closure" that comes from an execution is often fleeting and insufficient. Countless murder victims' family members oppose the death penalty because they recognize it does not bring true healing and merely foster violence.

NEVADA SETS THE PRECEDENT

Nevada was the first state in the U.S. to use the gas chamber. From 1924-1979, Nevada executed 32 men using the gas chamber.

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,' 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.

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



**CATHOLIC
MOBILIZING
NETWORK**

**ENDING THE DEATH PENALTY.
PROMOTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.**