



Pro-Life and the Death Penalty

A Resource For Consistent Life Ethics

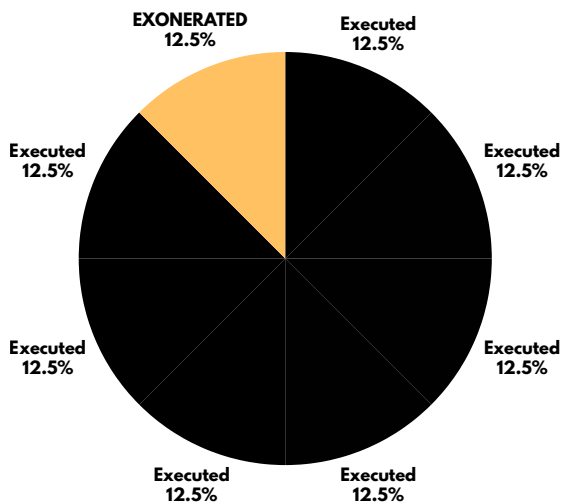
SCADP consists of a large coalition of supporters from diverse backgrounds who support the organization's work. SCADP has no comment on issues outside of abolishing the death penalty and catalyzing criminal justice reform. This sheet was created to support people who come to our mission and vision with this lens.

Consistent Life Ethic:

Consistent Life Ethic (otherwise known as Whole Life Ethic) is an ideology that prioritizes the sanctity of the total human life. Consistent Life Ethic values the preservation of life and opposes abortion, the death penalty, assisted suicide, and euthanasia.

Innocence:

Innocent life can hang in the balance of capital punishment, and one innocent person executed is one too many. Since 1973, 200 people have been exonerated from death row after evidence emerged of their innocence. Statistically speaking, that's approximately one innocent person exonerated for every eight executions. The death penalty does not save lives, but rather it only perpetuates a cycle of violence and increases the loss of human life.



Deterrence:

"General deterrence suggests that punishing one person for a given crime will deter others from committing the same crime (and possibly even other crimes)."

- Danielle Sered, *Until We Reckon*, p.60-61

No conclusive evidence exists that proves the success of the deterrent effect. Generally, states without the death penalty have consistently lower murder rates than states with the death penalty. A New York Times review in 2000 of murder rates over the past 20 years found that the murder rate in states with the death penalty has been 48% to 101% higher than in non-death penalty states.

Death Penalty States Murder Rates* and Non-Death Penalty States Murder Rates

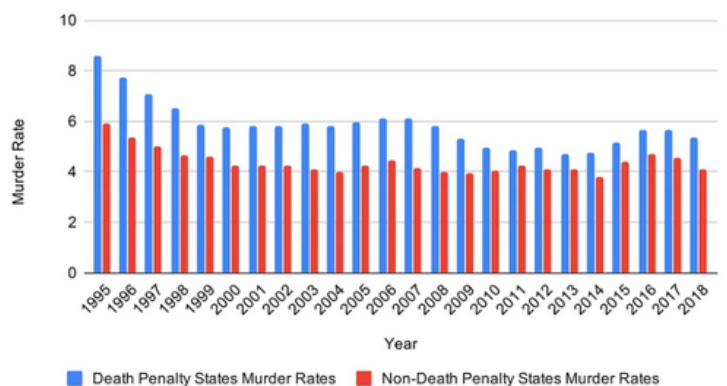


Image 1. Death Penalty Murder Rates and Non-Death Penalty Murder Rates. FBI's Uniform Crime Reports 1995-2018.

Source: Medium by Tori Schwausch

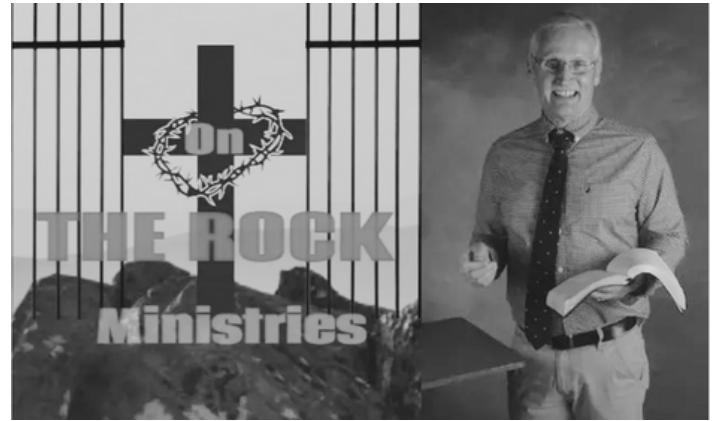
"Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done."

Bryan Stevenson, Equal Justice Initiative

Redemption:

Those who maintain support for the death penalty fail to recognize someone's ability to redeem their life. Acknowledging redemption stories from survivors of death row is the first step. From death row to abundant life, James MacPhee, otherwise known as "Pastor Jimmy" turned his life around. Pastor Jimmy survived a 45 year prison sentence, with three of those years being on South Carolina's death row. Within that time frame Pastor Jimmy came to change his life through religion and he claims that "God transformed him from a murderer to a peacemaker". There have been more people transformed by Pastor Jimmy's living than would have ever been transformed by his execution.

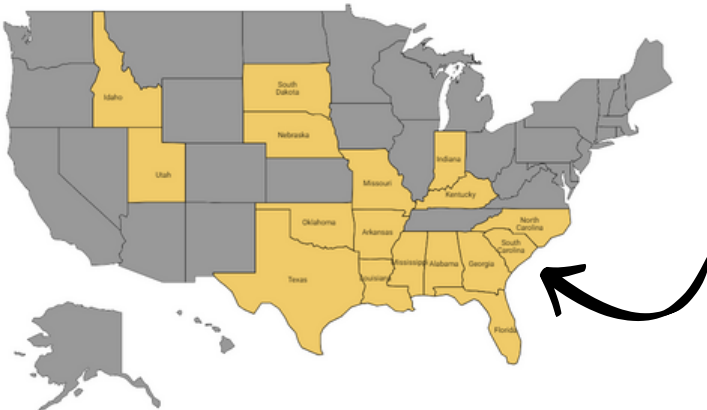
No one is beyond redemption.



Pastor Jimmy says that it is unfortunate that a loss of control of 45 seconds got him 45 years in prison, but he did not lose those last 25 years, he gained eternal life through redemption.

The Cruel Irony:

States where abortion is banned but the death penalty is legal



SOURCES: AP, New York Times. (NOTE: Georgia and South Carolina ban abortions after 6 weeks, Nebraska and North Carolina ban abortions after 12 weeks, Florida after 15 weeks and Utah after 18 weeks. Tennessee bans abortions and Arizona bans abortions after 15 weeks, and both states allow for the death penalty, but executions have been paused by an executive actions.)

For those who maintain a pro-life belief system yet support the death penalty do not recognize the juxtaposition in this situation.

To be pro-life it is then contradictory to support a system that does the opposite - a system that ends life unnaturally. South Carolina is one in seventeen states that have the most pro-life ethics and legislation yet the death penalty is still legal, which is sheer hypocrisy.

How to make a lasting impact:

With the recent overturning of Roe V. Wade, Pro-Life activism groups have asked their supporters to shift their focus on this issue that is relevant to the sanctity of human life. They have encouraged those who currently hold a pro-life belief to expand its definition and adopt the consistent life ethic. Therefore, a continuous message of fighting for life is displayed and lends their voice to the anti-death penalty movement.

