

# Washington State Ends Capital Punishment

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*Around one-third of world nations impose the death sentence in judicial rulings.*

*Of all known state-sponsored executions, 12 nations carry out most of them: America, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Sri Lanka, - according to [deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://deathpenaltyinfo.org).*

Capital punishment flagrantly violates the Eight Amendment, prohibiting “cruel and unusual punishments.”

On October 11, Washington became the 20th US state, along with the District of Columbia, to prohibit it.

In *State of Washington v. Allen Eugene Gregory*, its Supreme Court unanimously ruled to end the practice, calling it unconstitutional, arbitrary and racially discriminatory, adding:

“The most important consideration is whether the evidence shows that race has a meaningful impact on imposition of the death penalty. We make this determination by way of legal analysis, not pure science.”

“As noted by appellant, the use of the death penalty is unequally applied — sometimes by where the crime took place, or the county of residence, or the available budgetary resources at any given point in time, or the race of the defendant.”

“The death penalty, as administered in our state, fails to serve any legitimate penological goal; thus, it violates article I, section 14 of our state constitution.”

“All (outstanding death) sentences are hereby converted to life imprisonment.”

“We leave open the possibility that the legislature may enact a ‘carefully drafted statute’ to impose capital punishment in this state, but it cannot create a system that offends constitutional rights.”

In 2014, Washington imposed a capital punishment moratorium.

In May 2002, the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty alliance of NGOs, bar associations, local bodies and unions designated October 10 as the annual World Day Against the Death Penalty beginning in 2003.

There’s nothing just about state-sponsored murder, notably when against wrongfully accused victims.

In America, they’re mostly poor Blacks and Latinos, denied due process and judicial fairness.

The system is rigged against them - internationally famous Mumia Abu-Jamal's wrongful conviction best known.

Many others in America languish unfairly on death row - innocent of what they're accused of.

In 2000, former Illinois Gov. George Ryan declared a moratorium on capital punishment after 13 prisoners were found innocent and released.

On January 11, 2003, two days before leaving office, he cleared death row, commuting sentences for 163 men and four women to life imprisonment - declaring a moratorium on future executions, saying:

"The facts that I have seen in reviewing each and every one of these cases raised questions not only about (their innocence), but about the fairness of the death penalty system as a whole."

"Our capital system is haunted by the demon of error: error in determining guilt and error in determining who among the guilty deserves to die."

Calling Illinois' death penalty system "arbitrary, capricious, and therefore immoral," he ended his gubernatorial tenure by pardoning four men and issuing a blanket commutation for all state prisoners on death row, adding "The legislature couldn't reform it. Lawmakers won't repeal it, and I won't stand for it. I must act."

In January 2011, both Houses of Illinois' legislature voted to end capital punishment, Gov. Pat Quinn officially abolishing it in March, saying it's impossible "to create a perfect, mistake-free death penalty system."

The Campaign to End the Death Penalty (CEPD) has chapters in California, Delaware, New York, Texas, and Chicago.

CEPD gained prominence after California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger denied clemency to save Stan "Tookie" Williams from execution.

As a teenager, he co-founded the Crips street gang in South Central Los Angeles - later was unjustly convicted and sentenced to death for multiple murders he said he had nothing to do with.

He was denied a proper defense, proceedings rigged against him. Though later evidence was exculpatory, it wasn't enough to save him.

Countless other Blacks and Latinos in America are mistreated the same way.

Williams was a model prisoner, becoming an anti-gang activist on death row, renouncing his former affiliation. He co-wrote books and engaged in other activities to convince youths not to join street gangs.

He was nominated for Nobel Peace Prize recognition several times. In 2004, a feature film called Redemption: The Stan Tookie Williams Story was made about his life to honor him.

It wasn't enough. On December 13, 2005, he was put to death by lethal injection in San Quentin State Prison. Numerous others in America annually perish the same way unjustly.

CEPD chapters and other anti-capital punishment activists aim to end the barbaric practice – state-sponsored murder harming the innocent as well as guilty, flagrantly flouting due process and judicial fairness.

It's notably ineffective in deterring crime, unacceptable in civilized societies. Most countries prohibit the practice.

Law Professor/constitutional expert Charles Black (1915 – 2001), author of the book titled "Capital Punishment," denounced the practice as fatally flawed, saying:

There are some "hanging prosecutors, hanging juries, hanging judges, and hanging governors. But, overwhelmingly, the trouble is not in the people but in the system – or nonsystem."

Separately, he said

"(t)he possibility of judicial fairness for accused minorities is as likely their "learn(ing) to speak decent Japanese by the end of the month."

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