

Death Penalty Quotes

"Every chance we get, we need to challenge the mentality that compassion is a weakness. Compassion is the toughest thing of all, but it's the only thing that works to restore peace in our lives." - Carol Byars, member of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation, Houston, Texas

"I am pleased that I am able to stand here today and say with a pure heart and a meaningful heart that I am against the death penalty. There is no purpose that it serves except to further the damage that has already been done." - Mamie Till-Mobley, Addressing Illinois Governor George Ryan in her final public appearance, December 2002

"I don't believe that Jesus would have supported the death penalty." - President Jimmy Carter

"The death penalty doesn't need your assent to continue....it needs your indifference." - Ray Krone, 100th exoneree from death row since 1973

"To me the death penalty is vengeance, and vengeance doesn't really help anyone in the healing process." - Bud Welch, Board President, Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights. His daughter Julie was killed in the Oklahoma City bombing.

"It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and ... those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." - Robert F. Kennedy, June 6, 1967, Cape Town, South Africa

"The decision is good, after all grief is a very personal matter and not all victims of the atrocities will feel better just because the death of their loved ones has been avenged." - Sarafina Mukamusoni welcoming the decision of Rwanda's Parliament to ban the death penalty, New Times, June 26, 2007

"Conservatives, especially, should remember that capital punishment is a government program, so skepticism is warranted." - George Will

"The movement to abolish the death penalty needs the religious community because the heart of religion is about compassion, human rights, and the indivisible dignity of each human person made in the image of God." - Sister Helen Prejean.

"The abolition of the death penalty is making us a civilized society. It shows we actually do mean business when we say we have reverence for life." - Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

"From this day forward, I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death ... I feel morally and intellectually obligated simply to concede that the death penalty experiment has failed." - U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun

"Unless we live with nonviolence and reverence for all living beings in our hearts, all our humaneness and acts of goodness, all our vows, virtues, and knowledge, all our practices to give up greed and acquisitiveness are meaningless ... Indeed, the pain of others is our own, for the consequences of neglect and apathy cannot be long in coming our way." - Mahavira, founder of Jainism

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"In all religions, we make a choice about what we emphasize, and I choose to come down on the side of a loving God." - Reverend Bernice King

"No man has the right to take God's place and say another man should die. It destroyed my life." - Perry Cobb, who spent 8 years on death row in Illinois for a crime he did not commit. He was exonerated in 1987.

"Standing alone among great democratic nations in imposing the death penalty is another moral decision that Americans are being forced to confront." - President Jimmy Carter

"The calculated killing of a human being by the state involves, by its very nature, an absolute denial of the executed person's humanity. The most vile murder does not, in my view, release the state from constitutional restraint on the destruction of human dignity." - U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan

"Criminals, people who commit crimes, usually society rejects these people. They are also part of society. Give them some form of punishment to say they were wrong, but show them they are part of society and can change. Show them compassion." - Dalai Lama.

"I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life. We cannot support any act of killing; no killing can be justified. But not to kill is not enough ... If in your thinking you allow the killing to go on, you also break this precept. We must be determined not to condone killing, even in our minds." - Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen Buddhist monk, peace activist, scholar, and poet

"If people are genuinely concerned with the victims' family's plight, there should instead be a clamor for the legal and social measures which will provide the real support systems these families need in their times of anguish and irrevocable loss – financial assistance, therapeutic counsel, trial information, resolution, etc." - Marietta Jaeger-Lane, co-founder of the Journey of Hope ... From Violence for Healing

"The ultimate measure of a person is not where one stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where one stands at times of challenge and controversy." - Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Humankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred." - Mohandas Ghandi

"There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest." - Elie Wiesel, 1986 Nobel Peace Laureate and Holocaust Survivor

"...we as the Church need to express wherever appropriate and wherever possible our stance against the death penalty. We need to talk about it. A lot of people don't feel comfortable in doing this but I think we need to, as the Pope says, preach the whole gospel of life." - Bishop Gabino Zavala, San Gabriel Region of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles