

URGENT ACTION

MAN EXECUTED FOR CRIME WHEN HE WAS 18 YEARS OLD

Billy Wardlow was executed on 8 July 2020. He was on death row in Texas, USA in connection with the 1993 murder of an 82-year-old man when he was just 18 years old. The jury that sentenced Billy Wardlow was never presented mitigating evidence. Since 2005, it's unconstitutional to impose a death sentence on anyone younger than 18 when the crime occurred. Scientific research shows that development of the brain and psychological and emotional maturation continues into a person's 20s. Two jurors believed that he should have had his sentence commuted in light of this new evidence.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Billy Joe Wardlow was executed on 8 July 2020. He was convicted and sentenced to death in 1995 for the murder of an 82-year-old man in rural Morris County, Texas. The death occurred during a botched attempt with his girlfriend to steal the victim's truck in order to flee their abusive homes in Cason, Texas and start a new life in Montana. Billy Wardlow, who had no prior history of violence, repeatedly expressed regret for his actions. He was just 18 when he committed the crime.

Based primarily on a recanted confession, the jury convicted him of capital murder. In the penalty phase of the trial, the jury relied on the testimony of an expert for the prosecution who stated that Wardlow, despite his young age, would constitute a continuing threat to prison officials and society if they spared him the death penalty. The sentencing jury never heard information refuting that premise, his remorse for the crime nor mitigating evidence about his abusive childhood.

In its 2005 ruling prohibiting the death penalty against anyone who was under 18 at the time of the crime, the US Supreme Court in *Roper v. Simmons* recognized the immaturity, impulsiveness, and poor judgment associated with youth, as well as the susceptibility of young people to "outside pressures, including peer pressure". The Court also acknowledged that "the qualities that distinguish juveniles from adults do not disappear when an individual turns 18". Indeed, since that time, scientific research has continued to show that brains do not fully mature until an individual reaches their early-to-mid-twenties. Therefore, no one can predict whether an 18-year-old will be dangerous in the future. This information was not available to the jury that sentenced Wardlow to death in 1995, and two jurors believed that his sentence should have been commuted in light of this new evidence.

The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights and Amnesty International opposes the sentence in all circumstances. As of 2020, 106 countries have abolished the death penalty for all crimes and more than two-thirds are abolitionist in law or practice. The US has executed 1519 people since 1976, and the State of Texas has accounted for 570 of those executions.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Billy Wardlow (He/His/Him)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 108/20

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/2595/2020/en/>