

State-Sanctioned Vengeance

By Beverly Jaynes

Even in Missouri, the second-most executing state in the nation, legislators are now poised to repeal our Law of Death—our death penalty. Conservatives and Republicans, now concede that legally killing people runs counter-productively to their credos of pro-life advocacy, fiscal responsibility, and to limiting governmental control over our lives. The number of executions in 2015, by Missouri decreased to only six, rather than the usual twelve or one each month, of years past.

Nationally, twenty-eight people were executed within only six states, another decrease in death during 2015. Six former death row prisoners were exonerated, bringing the total number of innocent men and women spared from death to 156. However, the number of those who have been wrongfully executed is unknown—publicly.

The Missouri Supreme Court ruled in 2015, to vacate the conviction and death sentence of Reginal Clemmons, based on findings of prosecutorial misconduct. However, prosecutors have been reluctant to release him from 22 years of imprisonment and have considered retrying him (still holding on to their death wish, unless they've released him by now).

For the past five years, the Missouri Senate has rejected Senator Joseph Keaveny's bill, which would require a state audit of the costs of administering our death penalty. Have its costs been so high that they feared a public backlash if revealed or if it became known that other state services, such as the MO Dept. of Mental Health or say, road maintenance had been cut in order to prioritize the costs of administering our death penalty—fiscal

p. 2) costs they deemed so important as to not even merit measurement? Meanwhile, the moral costs to humanity remain immeasurable!

But as typical of most evils, Secrecy is intrinsic to the very being and functioning of the death penalty. The costs of the lethal toxin and the doctor's fees to administer it are kept secret, as are the names of those doctors. Doctors trained to heal and who take the sacred oath of Hippocrates (which hung on the wall of my grandfather's doctor office) to, "First do no harm," use their healing skills to actually legally kill people by administering their injections!

Why are some Missourians, like Governor Jay Nixon, so determined to take a life with state-sanctioned vengeance, perpetuating the initial evil committed with more death and destruction!! Jurors are led by prosecutorial persuasion (and in some cases, possibly by prosecutorial misconduct) in deciding who is to die, ordaining that to be proper punishment. But does God so ordain? Or does man act as a kind of god with this governmental power over life and death?

Officers may abuse that power and they may have taken state sanctioned vengeance beyond the pale! There have been investigations under the PREA law, of allegations by Missouri prisoners that they have been handcuffed to their beds in the dead of night by two Correction Officers, who have left them to be raped by an inmate saying, "This is what we do to child molesters here." One such PREA investigation was of ICE offender, Angela Weber's allegations of being brutally, repeatedly raped with a stick, to the painful point she could barely walk, and five days later her injuries were examined by a Hedrick Hospital doctor, who prescribed treatment, never given to her at the ICE prison. Her allegations were dismissed by ICE prison investigators, claiming that the security camera

p.3) video from the inside of her cell-HU2 single room, showed no one entering there that night, in 2014.

However, it had been proven that security camera video of WEPDCC Correction Officers beating female offenders in the halls of HU2 one day in 2013, had been deleted by two officers. So if there had been a video of Angela Webber allegedly being raped, it is possible that it could have been deleted! And if this rape occurred and was recorded, it is possible that officials ordering it to be done, sadistically viewed the video!! What is as chilling is the prospect that officials may have virtually licensed prison staff and offenders to commit crimes, encouraging crime rather than rehabilitation!

I have personally experienced the abuse of power by a MOJOC official taking the law into his own hands and violating the real laws. Missouri Probation and Parole Board Member, Mr. Forrester actually stated (and was routinely voted recorded) during my Sept. 2007 Parole Board Hearing: "Although you are before us for your Second Degree Murder conviction and 33-year sentence, I am holding you accountable for First Degree Murder because I believe your crime was premeditated and deserves the First Degree conviction." In effect, I was denied parole based on a "Life Without Parole" sentence that First Degree Murder carries, although I actually had a 33-year sentence, carrying 0% time-to-be-served stipulation for the 1991 crime! But this is vigilante "justice" for you within our Injustice System here!

I believe that the power to condemn people to death is a corrupting one and leads to other evils within government. The quotation, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely," is true particularly by officials with totalitarian control over prisoners at their mercy! When officers of the law violate the laws they're sworn to uphold and the public trust as well, they undermine the very foundation upon which we all stand!