

## “Letter to the Editor”

By Alan Sorensen

Many governors and legislators are cautious to the potential dangers in executing those sentenced to the death penalty on anything less than empirical, verifiable evidence; there is reason to fear one could put to death, “An innocent person!”

All anyone has to do is look at the statistics of wrongful convictions by the National Registry of Exonerations, 4.1 percent of defendants sentenced to death are later “Classified as innocent,” and the number is even larger, 40 percent for other convictions.

Aside from the dehumanizing fact of the death penalty itself, these elected officials need to recognize the all too real danger of arrests and convictions based on the same old tired, “Hearsay, so called outcry” Words that are just as inhumane and dehumanizing as those in capital punishment.

I am surprised that these same legislators have not changed our laws to include lesser crimes for the death sentence, but perhaps they see the danger of creating a “Watershed moment”, a critical turning point, and a change to jurisprudence, the “Basic philosophy” to our laws and punishment.

Some things never change, such as our politicians and police don’t want to do the hard work of fact finding, real discovery of what was once called, “Provable facts” Not just some prosecutors idea of “Theory!”

In what reality is there a difference between the emotional, physical or financial pain of those convicted of a “Death sentence or those of virtual life” in the form stacked charges with the same facts, “Repeated over and over, like a sound bite or media spin.” While such governors and legislators may be cautious, “When in the public eye” of the possibility of executing a innocent person, they don’t see the difference in giving “One person, or thousands!” life in prison, is it not time that all rules of evidence have the same standard.

In addition, is it not long past time that the rule of law, charges, and the sentences is the same from one state to another? We are called the United States for a reason, regardless of race, gender or ideals we are of the same Nation.

Just for a moment, picture what it is like to be sentenced to prison for the rest of your life, regardless if it’s a death sentence or twenty, thirty or a hundred years, to be condemned is the same, the loss of family, work self respect,” It’s all gone like smoke in the wind.”

I fear for the day when these politicians truly start to believe in the truth of their laws and punishment, that every accusation, "Even with impeachable facts" is the absolute truth, they will forget all the long prison sentences that are only fracturing our economy, "seeing every crime as one deserving a death sentence."

In what reality is giving an individual who is close to forty years old over a hundred years, not a death sentence, "Will that person ever live long enough to rebuild their life," life without parole, virtual life is just what it sounds like, just another form of death, and this called humane!

When people truly believe in their certainties and values, they find the courage to do such things regardless of the truths they once lived by, giving no thought to what would be truly merciful, as they would for any wounded animal, and just put the victims of such laws, the "Scapegoat to death!" Such places as death row or your prisons are not humane in any form.

Judge Learned Hand said many times, "Our legal courts and procedures have always been haunted by the ghost of the truly innocent person wrongfully convicted. It is an unreal nightmare. By contrast such statement, the public is exposed to clear and convincing evidence that those who have spent five, ten, twenty or thirty years or more years in prison, who may have been executed, were in fact guiltless, and either a crime was committed by another, or never took place at all."

Regardless if it is from Supreme Court Justices like, Sandra Day O' Connor, Learned Hand or Ruth Bader Ginsburg, their truths are still with us if we only listen. "All people were created equal," and have the same rights! "Hearsay is not a surrogate for the truth," that is abuse of our laws.

I have to ask, when will our feckless elected officials learn that the same rules of law for the privileged, those who think and act as if they are special, advantaged, will apply such to all, not just words but in action, "The Rule of Law" must be the same for each of us or all you have is Anarchy. In this, I understand the anger of "Black Lives Matter."

So few problems pose a greater problem than the threat to a free, democratic society than the wrongful conviction of innocent people, such as happens too often to the poor when there is two rules of law for different class's of people.

My father taught me that sometimes you have to face a hard truth, which is here and now, the time for real change, for all of us to become advocates, to face the truth, "Our system is broken!"

Others, many of your friends, brothers and sisters, are guilty, but not as if they set out to hurt people, Have been condemned for life?

Yes our prisons are filled with convicts that claim they were "Framed or railroaded." Others, who have already done a lot of time, are sick, "Cling to the fact that they were erroneously convicted and imprisoned." While others have pleaded guilty, so they have a chance at freedom.

"How many people have been given many years" stacked convictions, all credited to the very same facts, same day, same time, all from the same alleged victim, "Is this justice!," or is that only for those with money?

With 40 percent wrongful convictions, at your tax dollar, 'Is this the world you want for your children, family and friends!' I for one have had enough, and this is not about me, only those who follow this same path.

It is long past time when we all must become advocates for change, when we must stand as a people and decide what and who we are, "This is not the future we want for those we love and care about", and even though you do not know me, I care about you!

I see and hear the fear of all the people in the world because of the "Covid-19 Virus," How they don't deserve this, I agree, but welcome to the real world, how many sit in jails and prisons just because of things they too do not deserve.

We have entered a period of politicization of prosecution in our lifetime, every person should be more than a little concerned, but what I hear sounds more like sheep! Those too afraid to even speak aloud.

What has happened to the people of the world, the combination of social media furor born out of snippets of videos and feckless elected officials too afraid of the consequences of not appeasing the mob rule? Is this your world?

Criminologists and the FBI know that individuals "age out" of crime, the National estimates for the cost of incarcerating an elderly person are at least \$60,000 a year, in large part due to health care, do you really know what your tax money is paying for, "Your Grand Parents in Prison!"

Think about it!