

DEATH PENALTY

Cold-blooded killing is a sick spectacle

The death penalty is again all over the news. This news proves that we are once again trailing the rest of the civilized world, which already has abandoned capital punishment.

First came the news that we executed the 1,000th human being since the resumption of capital punishment in 1977. Then the news that Stanley "Tookie" Williams, by all accounts a successfully rehabilitated prisoner, was nonetheless coldly killed in California.

These mechanical state-sponsored killings are simply premeditated, calculated, cold-blooded murders. They dehumanize not just the prisoners, but all of society, which is coarsened by the sick spectacle of official killings.

Why then do we let these killings continue in our name? Only countries like China and Iran kill their citizens like the United States does. Is this the sort of company we want to keep? Is this the sort of human rights example we want to promote to the rest of the world?

Today we know that innocent people are convicted. Just recently the 122nd inmate was freed from death row after DNA evidence led to his acquittal. We also know that the death penalty is not an effective deterrent to crime. Nor does it save money, as the cost of capital trials and appeals are typically more expensive than lifetime imprisonment.

With all we now know, we should also know that we can do better. Just as we work to end torture and other inhumane acts, we should work to end the barbaric practice of state-sponsored murder.

To help this work, or just learn more, I urge readers to visit the Web site for Coloradans Against the Death Penalty (www.coadp.org).

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