

Fact Sheet: The Death Penalty is RACIALLY BIASED.

“The system has proved itself to be wildly inaccurate, unjust, unable to separate the innocent men from the guilty and, at times, a very racist system.”

~ Former Illinois Governor George Ryan

RACIAL BIAS ON DEATH ROW

- Although African Americans make up 12% of the population, they account for 42% of current death row inmates. (1)
- Jurisdictions with the highest percentages of minorities on death row (2):
 - U.S. Military (86%)
 - Colorado (100%)
 - Louisiana (72%)
 - Pennsylvania (70%)
- In North Carolina, the odds of receiving a death sentence are *3.5 times higher* among defendants whose victims were white. (3)
- The odds of receiving a death sentence in Philadelphia are 38% higher in cases in which the defendant is black. (4)

RACIAL BIAS IN THE ACTUAL EXECUTION OF DEATH ROW INMATES

- People of color comprise 43% of total executions since 1976, while comprising only around 25% of the population. (5)
- Since 1977, blacks and whites have been the victims of murders in almost equal numbers, yet 80% of the people executed in that period were convicted of murders involving white victims. (6)

RACE IS A DECISIVE FACTOR IN JUVENILE DEATH SENTENCES

- More than 6 out of every 10 persons sentenced to death for childhood offenses since 1976 have been either African American or Latino.
- Almost 2 out of 3 juvenile offenders currently on death row are persons of color.
- Of the 22 juvenile offenders executed since 1976, almost 2 out of 3 were either African American or Latino.

A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE ON RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

- Since the United States ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1994, U.S. courts and legislatures have failed to act decisively in the face of evidence that race has a significant impact on capital sentencing. (7)

- SOURCES:**
- (1) “Death by Discrimination – The Continuing Role of Race in Capital Cases,” Amnesty International, April 24, 2003.
 - (2) “Race and the Death Penalty,” American Civil Liberties Union, 2003.
 - (3) Professors Jack Boger and Dr. Isaac Unah, University of North Carolina, 2001.
 - (4) “The Death Penalty in Black and White,” Death Penalty Information Center, 1998
 - (5) “Race and the Death Penalty,” American Civil Liberties Union, February 26, 2003.
 - (6) Bureau of Justice Statistics.
 - (7) “Death by Discrimination – The Continuing Role of Race in Capital Cases,” Amnesty International, 2003.

Information from the website of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, (202) 543-9577 www.ncadp.org
Reprinted by Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation, (360) 491-9093 www.olympiafor.org 2-15-05