

The Politics of Death

The death penalty has a political component. A prosecutor uses death as a way of showing the electorate that he is "tough on crime and tough on criminals." It matters not that the symbol of that toughness is a person the prosecutor knows is innocent. We want to believe that the system is fair and that our political leaders are executing hardened criminals who would otherwise pillage and rape the community. But illusion isn't truth and it feeds the culture of revenge that is based on short term thinking. Politicians looking for votes will preside over the execution showing the voters that he is tough enough to kill criminals who deserve to die. An innocent person whose death penalty should be commuted is subject to the political standing and pressures of the governor of the state. Executions that are based on a strong political influence are fundamentally wrong and it happens far too often that innocent blood becomes the price we pay for vengeance.