Capital Punishment: Pro and Con Arguments

Pro:

1) Justice and respect for human life demands that when a life has been taken some payment needs to be made.

2) Capital punishment should be reserved for the worst offenders of society's laws to make a statement that there are some things that are so destructive of the social fabric that they require the harshest possible penalty, which is the taking of a life.

3) In addition, capital punishment can serve as a deterrent to criminals from taking lives. If a person thinks he or she may die, they will think twice about their actions.

4) The protections that are built into the criminal justice system make it very unlikely that an innocent person will be killed as a result of a capital punishment error. For example, juries must reach a 12 to 0 verdict to give the person the death penalty. In addition, capital punishment cases are automatically appealed to the next level higher of court so that mistakes can be avoided.

5) The burden of proof in a capital case is on the prosecution. The defendant does not need to prove that he or she is not guilty. In contrast, the prosecution must make a case beyond a reasonable doubt before capital punishment is administered.

Con:

1) Those opposed to capital punishment point to the fact that civilized societies should not resort to vengeance in their justice system.

2) To take the life of a murderer is to lower the executioner to the moral level of the person who has committed this horrible crime.

3) Most murders are crimes of passion where people don't rationally consider the possible consequences of their actions. A person that kills in a rage, has committed a horrible offense there is no denying that, but should not sacrifice his or her life for that tragic error.

4) There is always the possibility that a murder can be changed and live a life of meaning and purpose.

5) It is possible that an innocent person might be wrongly accused and convicted of a crime. DNA evidence has freed a number of individuals who were on death row who were wrongly accused or murdered. It is not acceptable, in a just society for the possibility of an innocent person to lose his or her life because they were wrongly accused. capital punishment is administered in an unfair manner to a number of groups. African Americans, Hispanics, those living in the deep South, and rural areas have a much higher chance of facing capital punishment if they are convicted of a crime.

6) There is no statistical evidence that capital punishment acts as a deterrent to criminals. In fact, studies have shown that when states abolish capital punishment the crime rate does not increase for capital crimes, though one would assume it would if capital punishment was an actual deterrent.

7) Most of the nations of the world have eliminated capital punishment because they recognize that the state should not have the power of life and death.