

BLACK LIVES MATTER: OPPOSING THE DEATH PENALTY IS A RACIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

“When we open our eyes to the history of capital punishment, the conclusion becomes inescapable. The death penalty is just one more Confederate monument that we must tear down.”

--Henderson Hill, lawyer and activist, North Carolina
<https://racistroots.org/introduction/>

“Racial bias against defendants of color and in favor of white victims has a strong effect on who is capitally prosecuted, sentenced to death, and executed.”

--Death Penalty Information Center

The risk of death by homicide, like too many bad things in our society, falls most heavily on people of color. But the death penalty is sought, imposed, and executed mostly when White victims have been killed. **Black lives don't matter** in the administration of the death penalty – at least, they don't matter as much as White lives. **Contemporary data** shows this, north and south, east and west. The nation's **history** of enslavement, lynching, racial terror, and segregation explains it.

UUs committed to moving toward diversity, inclusion, and a culture of racial justice, <https://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/racial-justice>, should be part of the movement to end the death penalty, in their own communities and nationally.

For brief overviews:

From the Death Penalty Information Center, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/policy-issues/race>

From Equal Justice USA, <https://ejusa.org/wp-content/uploads/EJUSA-DP-factsheet-race.pdf>

For much more detail:

<https://files.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/reports/Enduring-Injustice-Race-and-the-Death-Penalty-2020.pdf>
[88 pp.; September 2020]

Valuing Black Lives: A Case for Ending the Death Penalty, by Prof. Alexis Hoag-Fordjour, Brooklyn Law School [26 pp.; 2020] <http://www.ozdachs.dev/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Hoag-Columbia-Race-Final-1.pdf>

Examples of state-specific resources:

<https://racistroots.org/>, from the Center for Death Penalty Litigation in Durham, North Carolina

<https://documents.deathpenaltyinfo.org/Oklahoma-Deeply-Rooted-Report-10-14-2022.pdf>, from the Death Penalty Information Center, addressing a state that uses the death penalty as much as or more than any other

But don't stop reading if you live in a state where African-Americans were not enslaved.

In October 2018, the **Washington** state supreme court said unanimously that state's death penalty law was unconstitutional because defendants of color were four times more likely to be sentenced to death for comparable crimes. They said, “we are confident that the association between race and the death penalty is not attributed to random chance.” <http://www.courts.wa.gov/opinions/pdf/880867.pdf>

The **California** Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans recognized that the death penalty throughout the country is a direct legacy of slavery, lynching, and racial terror.

<https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ab3121-reparations-interim-report-2022.pdf>