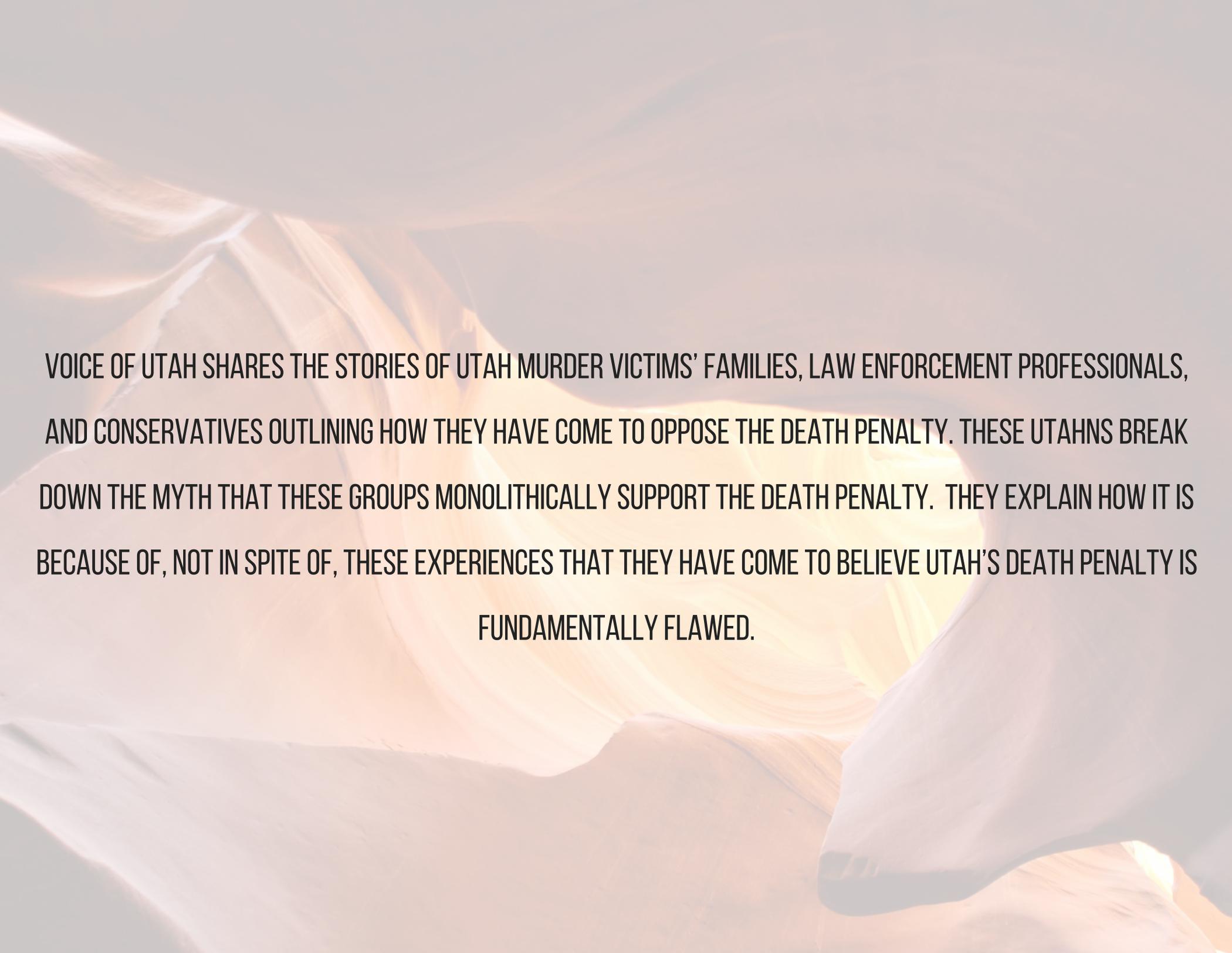


# VOICES OF UTAH



MURDER VICTIM FAMILY MEMBERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS, AND CONSERVATIVES SHARE THEIR SUPPORT  
FOR ENDING THE DEATH PENALTY



VOICE OF UTAH SHARES THE STORIES OF UTAH MURDER VICTIMS' FAMILIES, LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS, AND CONSERVATIVES OUTLINING HOW THEY HAVE COME TO OPPOSE THE DEATH PENALTY. THESE UTAHNS BREAK DOWN THE MYTH THAT THESE GROUPS MONOLITHICALLY SUPPORT THE DEATH PENALTY. THEY EXPLAIN HOW IT IS BECAUSE OF, NOT IN SPITE OF, THESE EXPERIENCES THAT THEY HAVE COME TO BELIEVE UTAH'S DEATH PENALTY IS FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED.



## CREIGHTON HORTON

FORMER PROSECUTOR WITH UTAH ATTORNEY  
GENERAL'S OFFICE AND THE SALT LAKE COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

For more than 30 years, I worked as a prosecutor in Utah, both in the Salt Lake County District Attorney's Office and in the Utah Attorney General's Office. During that time, I prosecuted more than a dozen capital cases. Some of the defendants I prosecuted have been executed, and one is currently on death row.

**Towards the end of my career, I confronted a reality I had scarcely considered – that, because no system of justice is perfect, it's possible that an innocent person could be convicted of a capital offense and sentenced to death.** It became real for me when I came face-to-face with Kirk Bloodsworth, the first person in the United States to have been convicted of murder and sentenced to death, and later exonerated by DNA evidence.

I understand that wanting a murderer put to death is a natural human response to having someone brutally take away the life of someone you love, and I would probably feel the same if it happened to me. And yet, **I have seen victims' families decide that the best way of achieving justice and gaining closure was to have defendants spend the rest of their lives in prison, rather than pursuing the death penalty.** Some even believe that life in prison without parole is tougher on the criminal than the death penalty. Others feel that the only way for justice to be done is through the death penalty.

But I cannot speak for victims' families. In this booklet, you will read the views and insights of those who have suffered profound losses that most of us, thankfully, will never have to endure. **Their voices should be heard and considered by us all, and particularly by those in a position to shape public policy in the future.**

You will also hear from others whose careers and experiences have shaped their views about capital punishment – people such as prosecutors, community activists and leaders. **If you are a firm supporter of the death penalty, I hope you will nevertheless listen to their voices, realizing that many who are now speaking against capital punishment once felt the same way you do.** My experience has been that the closer one comes to the reality of our present death penalty system, the more one tends to doubt its efficacy and question its value to society.

# BRETT TOLMAN

SALT LAKE CITY, UT

FORMER UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH



I am the son of a peace officer and was a tough law and order prosecutor for many years. In 2006 I was appointed by President George W. Bush to be the United States Attorney for the District of Utah. I prosecuted violent crime for many years and previously held strong feelings for the use of the death penalty in administering the interests of justice.

**It is precisely because of my experiences as a federal prosecutor that I can no longer support the death penalty.** I have come to realize that the death penalty serves as **no deterrent** to violent crime. **Additionally, many victims I have consulted with have emphasized a lack of closure** and futility in the application of the death penalty.

**Further, working for so many years in the government only highlighted for me the frequency with which the government makes mistakes, and the lack of efficiency with which the criminal justice system operates.**

So I asked myself this question: If the death penalty does not deter violent crime, victims often express the inadequacy of the death penalty in their coping, and the fallibility and cost attributed to the government's use of the death penalty—**what is there justifying the use of the death penalty in this country?**

**The answer is plain to me—the death penalty is not justified.**

# MAYBELL ROMERO

FORMER PROSECUTOR IN CACHE  
AND RICH COUNTIES AND  
PROFESSOR OF LAW AT BYU

**As a former prosecutor, I've been an eyewitness to the dysfunction of the criminal justice system.** The system preys upon the poor, and wealth, all too often, determines access to justice. Indigent defendants are disadvantaged at every turn, from not being able to afford bail to failing to successfully complete probation due to the inability to pay exorbitant fines and fees (such as pay-to-stay). These disadvantages don't just hamper indigent defendants facing minor misdemeanor convictions, but also those facing felony charges and death sentences.

**The arbitrariness with which those who are considered for the death penalty is shockingly common and widespread.** When we look at those being considered for the death penalty, it's more arbitrary than one could possibly imagine. Court appointed defense counsel are often overworked, underpaid, and insufficiently trained to offer meaningful assistance. Authority to seek the death penalty lies with prosecutors, who are often more motivated by politics and election results rather than justice.

A 2015 study from the Brennan Center for Justice based at New York University School of Law **concluded that the death penalty does not serve as a deterrent to the commission of crime.** The study explained that crimes are often "committed in a heated moment based only on immediate circumstances" such that offenders never have an opportunity to consider the prospect of being executed as a result of their actions.

**Science is always changing the manner in which crimes are investigated, and the advent of DNA evidence has exposed many of the criminal justice system's, as well as the death penalty's, flaws. More than 300 people across the county have been exonerated by DNA testing and evidence since 1989. More than a quarter of those people were convicted of murder, while 20 were sentenced to death.** Innocent people have been sentenced to death, and it is all but certain that innocent people have been executed. The Brennan Center study also revealed that social, economic, and environmental factors play much more of a role in reducing crime rates than the lack of deterrence offered by the death penalty. I would rather see state resources used in constructive support of its citizens rather than the death penalty. **The results of execution cannot be undone, and I simply cannot support giving government that level of power.**

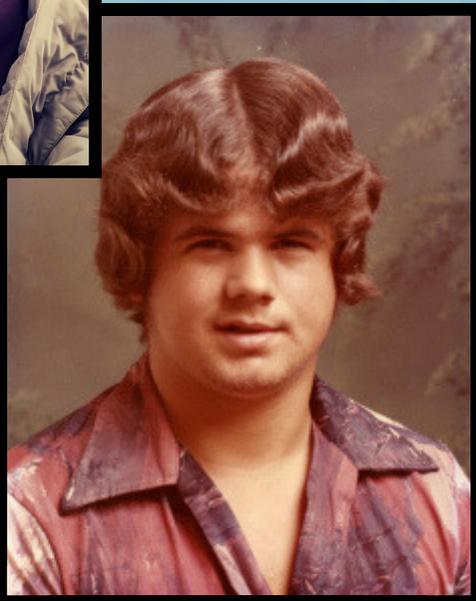




**VALERIE YOUNG**

WEST VALLEY CITY, UT

**SISTER OF MURDER VICTIM  
CRAIG YOUNG**



Craig was 16 and I was 18. On July 31, 1978 at about 10 PM my brother's life was ended in a horrible way. That night Craig travelled home after high school football practice on a country road, alone on his motorcycle. He was followed by a car full of boys who had been fighting with him. Shortly thereafter several men driving past discovered Craig on the side of the road, hemorrhaging, with an object shoved into his brainstem. My mother arrived at the scene as they put a sheet over Craig's face. She followed the ambulance to the local hospital and 30 minutes later my brother was pronounced dead. It's believed that he was attacked by that carful of boys, although they were never charged. These boys did not live anywhere near our town, but they were spotted near the crime scene right after Craig was found. Craig was missing the 200 dollars he had just received by cashing his work check at the local grocery store, and the boys in question were seen later with illegal drugs they had bought. We believe those boys murdered my brother for his money and because of the hatred one

of them had for Craig. It is devastating that no one was ever brought to justice in my brother's case; but even if those boys had been charged and convicted, I wouldn't have wanted the death penalty. And as confident as I am that those boys were the perpetrators, **I know we can never guarantee the guilt of someone with 100% certainty. That should cause all of us to pause and think.** I do believe in justice, and I believe justice would be better served by them spending the rest of their lives in prison, living with what they've done, knowing the pain they've caused. **I believe justice would be better served by not spending millions of dollars on a few cherry picked capital cases while other cases, like my brother's, are never resolved and left as "cold cases."** The resources poured into the death penalty could help our state's many cold cases.

I believe justice would have been better served by ensuring that my brother was remembered and not wasting extra time, money, or ink on the people who took his life. **The death penalty makes killers famous while we all forget about the victim.** Craig was my brother. He was a great friend. He was silly and funny. He was strong. He was handsome. He wrestled and skied. He was a member of Future Farmers of America. He existed and his is the name that should be remembered, not the names of the people who killed him. I don't want his name being used to justify killing another person.

**We can do much better by the families of murder victims than offering them our very broken death penalty. Real justice demands we do better.**

**Both of my parents were murdered during a home invasion robbery which was as senseless as it was inexplicable in their quiet Arizona community.** Along with several minor participants, two main people were charged in connection with the murder. One was charged with a capital offense and the other with a non-capital offense. The non-capital defendant was convicted within four years of the crime. He was sentenced to at least 40 years to life in prison. He will be required to serve 40 calendar years before the possibility of parole, which, given his age and other factors is effectively life without parole. The other defendant, however, was charged with capital murder. **Now, nearly six years later, a trial date has yet to be set, due in no small part to the delays brought about because of the capital offense.** The entire process has been made significantly and necessarily slower because of the additional protections that exist in a capital case. After what are likely to be additional repeated pre-trial and trial delays, **my family will continue to suffer through more delays that will occur as a result of the appellate process that necessarily follows the anticipated conviction.** That process will continue for decades. During this delay, my children, one of whom was just a few months old at the time of his grandparents' murder and the other who had not yet been born, will literally be a generation removed from the crime before the process ends. **Throughout that time, we will be faced with the prospect of having that wound opened and reopened at every moment in the appellate process; a burden which is really horrible for us to bear.** The trial of the first defendant allowed us the opportunity to see what it feels like when the process moves with the speed of a non-death penalty case. **There is a tremendous relief that comes from knowing that defendant received a fair trial, a very lengthy sentence and he will sit in prison for the rest of his life likely without the case being heard of again.**

Many of us know the names of the murderers convicted of death row offenses, but how often do we know the names of the victims? Anyone of a certain age knows of Gary Gilmore or Ted Bundy, but few, if any, can recall the names of their victims. **Each time the killer's case resurfaces in the long court process they are given another dose of the fame they seek, yet the stories of the victims and the families they leave behind fade into the background;** the cases now centered on the killer and their rights. Even worse, as the time for execution draws nearer, an appropriate public outcry arises again focusing attention on the killer and the death penalty, forcing the victim family to relive the horrific events while attention is focused on the murderer and saving their life.

I have a unique perspective on this subject not only because I'm in the horrible position of being the victim of that crime, but also because I'm a practicing criminal defense attorney. For a time, I was Rule 8 qualified to represent indigent defendants in capital cases, and have on numerous occasions been involved in those cases. Something that we don't hear about very often is the tremendous emotional toll that these cases take on people that are involved in the legal process. My experience is on the defense side and I know first-hand how the attorneys, mostly public defenders court appointed to do this work, give a portion of their lives attempting to save the life of the accused. I believe they are engaged in a noble cause, largely thankless in the eyes of the general public, giving a portion of their souls to the work of trying to avoid government sanctioned killing of convicted defendants. As I look at that process as a victim and think of the good people who appropriately fight to protect vital constitutional rights, people who are so concerned and wrapped up and involved for many decades in the lives of these notorious criminals - it hurts me to know of their sacrifice as well. **I suggest that rather than continuing on with a system that demands such a sacrifice, the more sensible approach is to allow life without parole sentences to replace the death penalty.**

From my perspective as a victim with the insights of a criminal defense attorney, life without parole is both a severe and appropriate sanction while imposing fewer costs on the attorneys, the courts, the taxpayers and most especially the victims. **Life without parole allows victims and their families to know that those convicted of these crimes are off the streets and that those who are convicted are left with only time to think about the harms they caused, rather than dragging victims and everybody else through decades and decades of trauma and delay as they hope for a different result.**

**STEVEN SHAPIRO**  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

**SON OF MURDER VICTIMS GLENNA AND  
LAWRENCE SHAPIRO**





**CHRISTINE STENQUIST**  
LAYTON, UT

**SISTER OF MURDER VICTIM SUNDAY  
BLOMBERGH**



In April 2010, I got the call from my mother. "Your sister Sunday has been missing for a few days," she said. Thoughts raced through my head. What does that mean, missing? How does an adult go missing? You then begin to play all the possible scenarios in your mind. I had so many questions and no answers. I live far away from my family and the distance couldn't have felt any further than at that moment in time. Then the days trickled into weeks. The investigation continued. Leads went nowhere. Friends and family gathered to conduct searches and hand out flyers. Interviews with news outlets to help raise awareness continued for nearly a month. Then finally a break in the case.

Her body was discovered after an accomplice lead police to the dumpsite. Now, the pain begins. Over the course of the next 15 months my family members tried to understand the reasoning behind our beautiful loved one's murder.

As the trial date approached the family was asked by the state about the death penalty. It was certainly on the table given the heinousness of the crime. I remember my own mixed reaction to the inquiry. My sister, a vivacious 28-year-old with a young daughter was killed because her estranged in-laws didn't want her to move away. We thought that couldn't be why they shot, strangled, and stabbed her. That couldn't be why her life was taken. And now we were being asked about the proper punishment for such an evil act.

It would be disingenuous of me to say I didn't flash with vengeance with the thought of these individuals that plotted my sister's death being equally extinguished. I was at a crossroads with my own humanity. But we all knew that an eye for an eye was not the way. **In the end we told the state that we didn't want the death penalty, because we knew that we'd spend decades reliving this tragedy. Ultimately the death penalty wasn't sought, and I can honestly say I'm glad that decision was made. Though a quicker resolution to the case certainly couldn't take away the pain of losing my sister, it has allowed our family to more easily heal and move on without having to continually see the faces and hearing the names of those that took her from us.** Even with the certainty of the criminal act and who the perpetrator was, the death penalty and its terrible process would never bring our Sunday back.

My 15-year-old sister, Wendy, went missing on October 15, 1969. My father dropped her off at her high school that morning, but she never made it. Our family reported her missing that evening, but were told that a person must be missing for 24 hours before the police and FBI can get involved. We received a call before our lines had been tapped by the FBI demanding that we not contact the authorities or we would be sorry. They never called again. My family spent months trying to find Wendy. Reports of her being seen in California would come in, and my father would travel out there to search, never finding anything.

In March of 1970 two boys spotted Wendy's purse on the banks of the Little Calumet River. The authorities then dragged the river and found her body. I was there as they pulled her body out, though they prevented me from seeing her. Wendy's body was too badly decomposed to determine a cause of death, but it was believed that her body was put into that river shortly after her disappearance. The person or people who took Wendy were never found.

Had they been found though, **I know that the death penalty being sought and imposed would have done nothing to bring peace and healing to my family.** I know that the wounds of those months would have been torn open time and again as the appeals process lasted decades. **I know that Wendy would have been forgotten as the public only remembered the killer every time their name made headlines in the papers.**

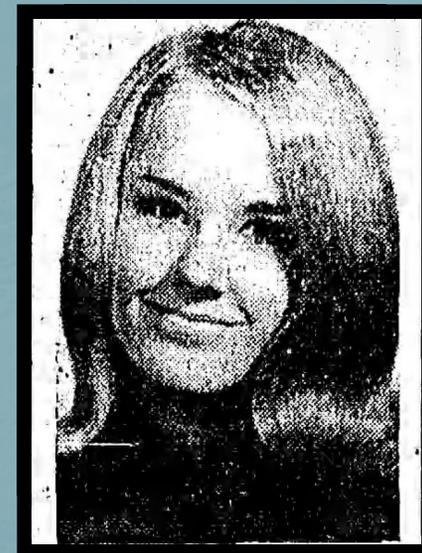
I've been involved in this world long enough to know that the government wields massive amounts of power, and often abuses it. That extends to the death penalty. What if they had gotten it wrong? What if they believed they'd found Wendy's murderer and tried, convicted, and executed that person, only to possibly find out that it was the wrong person?

**We shouldn't risk creating another grave injustice by trying to right the original injustice.**



**CAROL GNADE**  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

**SISTER OF MURDER VICTIM  
WENDY GNADE**





**JAKE PARKINSON**  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

CHAIR OF SALT LAKE COUNTY REPUBLICAN  
PARTY

I'm a pragmatic person. My political views are also pragmatic. I oppose the death penalty because it isn't a practical solution for any problem we face in our society. It isn't fiscally responsible. It doesn't deter crime. It ignores the reality of human error as well as intended and unintended bias. It's time to end this irrational practice and reallocate those resources to improve our criminal justice system.

I oppose the death penalty. For a variety of reasons it doesn't align with my conservative ideals. The death penalty is insanely expensive as many studies have shown, and I believe taxpayer dollars can be more effectively spent within the criminal justice system. Additionally, I favor rehabilitation over retribution because two wrongs don't make a right.

**HEIDI BALDERREE**  
SARATOGA SPRINGS, UT

REPUBLICAN GRASSROOTS ACTIVIST AND  
CAMPAIGN MANAGER



My father worked at the Utah State Penitentiary for 20 years. He had an outstanding record and did a lot to improve the lives of inmates. Throughout my life my father would tell me that **the execution process didn't deter crime** and it helped no one. He said it was a waste of money that **stretched the emotional distress of a victim's family for years**. That the death penalty was another form of oppression to frighten communities. **He believed that the money spent on the expensive death penalty system would be better spent on offering support and mental health services to those affected by crime, and improving the prison and justice system.** Having worked in prisons for decades he knew just how imperfect the system could be. He saw constant failures from the time people arrived to the time they left. Supporting victims' families and mental wellness are always a better use of public funds, rather than being used to support a cumbersome, burdensome, and inflated death penalty system.

Through the years my dad would come home and talk to me about his job. I remember a story of a prisoner who had died but nobody wanted to claim the body. My father had to decide what to do with the remains. He talked about when a man was stabbed to death in front of him and he had to see the aftermath of a gruesome prison death. **My father, throughout his life, tried to bring humanity to a cold and dark world which is the prison system many of us never see.**

My father had a soft blue suede vest which went with his best blue suit. It was soft, shiny and I would hold that blue vest when my father was away. One day on TV I saw a prisoner marched into a proceeding related to his execution. There were men escorting the prisoner, and, for their protection, the media wouldn't show their faces, only their clothing. I could see my father's blue vest on the TV screen. I never could look at that vest again without remembering that it was one of the last things a condemned man had seen before he died.

**My father believed not just that the death penalty was a cumbersome burden that prolonged the pain of victims, but also that it was very important to be a life affirming nation, and that from cradle to grave we should honor human life.** Incarcerate the guilty for life, yes, but allow God to decide the fate of those behind bars in His time.

## MARY KHALAF

OGDEN, UT

CONSERVATIVE  
ACTIVIST AND  
DAUGHTER OF FORMER  
UTAH PRISON WORKER  
LADDIE PRUETT



I've always supported the Death Penalty. I think in principle, in a perfect world, it could be considered a valid form of justice. Like many, an "eye-for-an-eye" mentality always seemed a principled argument to me and I've never really questioned the sentiment further. I mean, if someone takes the life of another don't they forfeit their right to live? **But as a national debate about the death penalty has emerged, I have re-examined this issue** and exposed myself to new information on how the death penalty is applied. **Doing so has caused me to change my mind about the death penalty.**

**The death penalty is not a deterrent to crime. Criminal justice experts agree on this.** Even in areas where the death penalty is most often used, no deterrent benefit is seen. In fact, the region in the United States with the highest use of the death penalty (the South) also has the highest murder rate. If the death penalty deterred crime in a considerable way, the opposite should be true. **While the death penalty doesn't keep us any safer than prison-for-life, it comes with a far greater burden on taxpayers.** These extreme costs exist because of the extra safeguards in place. And caution is justified when taking a human life. **Additionally, this process can be very harmful to the families of victims.** Through every appeal the family must constantly re-experience the most traumatic event of their lives. Besides lasting years and being highly publicized, capital cases also come with great uncertainty. It is more likely that a death sentence will be overturned than result in an execution. **Victims are strung along with the promise of a punishment that is unlikely to ever occur.** In contrast, when an offender is sentenced to life without parole, the sentence begins right away and the family can truly move forward with their lives.

**Let's save the money, stop the re-victimization of the families, and reduce the power government yields.** The reality is that we can never have a foolproof system because humans are imperfect. So, with that imperfection let's err on the side of caution. It's time to get rid of the death penalty. We'll let God sort it out in the next life.

**THOMAS DYCHES**  
SAINT GEORGE, UT

CONSERVATIVE PODCASTER, RADIO CO-HOST,  
AND GRASSROOTS POLITICAL ACTIVIST





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