**A polarized vision of the death penalty in the United States**

Deemed as “inhumane“ by some and “morally justified“ by others, the death penalty has always been a divisive issue, especially in the United States, as this dossier testifies. Two articles from *The Guardian Weekly* and *The New York Times*, respectively published in 2011 and 2014, relate different cases of problematic death sentences in the USA, while a document from *PewResearch.org* from 2021 details figures about Americans’ opinion on the capital punishment. With their diverse views and their diachronicity, the documents lead us to wonder to what extent the death penalty is polarizing the American society and why.

First, we learn from *PewResearch* that most Americans still support the death penalty today. In fact, 64% believe it is morally justified in case of murder, an argument that was repeated by Justice Scalia in 1994 according to *The New York Times*: in the famously gruesome murder of Sabrina Buie, he argued the death penalty was justified, but also preferable to the circumstances of Sabrina’s death. Many other political figures in the USA also support the capital punishment, like governor Rick Perry, as we learn in *The Guardian*.

Nevertheless, there are risks involved in sentencing people to death. For *PewResearch*, 78% of Americans say that there is a possibility of an innocent being sentenced, and the two cases evoked in the documents echo that : *The Guardian* mentions Troy Davis, who was sentenced to death for the murder of a policeman even though most of the witnesses had reviewed their testimony against him, while *The New York Times* focuses on the two teenagers condemned to death for Buie’s murder who were acquitted after the evidence against them was proved flawed. In fact, in *PewResearch’s* survey, 56% of people even say that there is a risk of racial bias, as black people are more likely to be sentenced to death than white ones – Davis’s case might just be an example.

Moreover, as most respondents do not believe the death penalty to be an efficient deterrent against crime, it is understandable that people have asked for change over time. *The Guardian* mentions the outrage caused by Davis’s death, which led to demonstrations against the capital punishment and a call for politicians to get involved. Four years later, *The New York Times* article made an appeal to abolish the death penalty to avoid innocents’ deaths ; and yet, in 2021, the survey clearly shows that 60% of Americans still favour the death penalty, showing that there is no easy way out.

Eventually, in spite of its risks, the capital punishment still seems to have the favour of Americans and is nowhere near kicking the bucket.

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