

Good evening, I'm Milly, and today I will be talking to you on why Australia needs to help abolish the death sentence worldwide. In the last 40 years almost 1,500 executions have taken place in America alone and the death sentence is still used in law and practice in over 35 different countries. The last execution in Australia was in 1967 and thankfully we've abolished the death sentence. However a lot of countries that Australia has close relationships with still practice the death sentence.

The death sentence is putting innocent lives at risk. There have always been and always will be executions of innocent people. A new study by the National Academy of Sciences of The United States of America shows that at least 4% of all people who have received the death sentence are innocent. The only way to stop wrongful executions is to abolish the death sentence. Unlike prison sentences, death sentences are irreversible, and to execute an innocent person is morally reprehensible. Executing an innocent person is a risk that should not be taken.

The American Constitution states in the eighth amendment that "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." In 1990 Jesse Joseph Tafero was executed by electrocution, during which six-inch flames erupted from his head! Is this considered cruel and unusual? Jimmy Lee Gray died while banging his head against a steel pole in the gas chamber while reporters counted his moans, eleven apparently. Is this considered cruel and unusual? It took 2 hours for Joseph Rudolph III to die after being injected with lethal drugs, an attending reporter said he looked "like a fish on shore gulping for air." Is this considered cruel and unusual? These punishments contradict the American Constitution, and yet they continue, why is this?

It has been scientifically proven that in America, states with the death penalty have a higher murder rate than those without. The death penalty is meant to be a deterrent but it clearly isn't doing its job. As recently stated by the General Assembly of the United Nations "There is no conclusive evidence of the deterrent value of the death penalty." There is a much better option to the death sentence, which is life without parole. Because even the guilty should have the right to live. Leszek Syski is an antiabortion activist, he says that he "became convinced that the question of whether or not murderers deserve to die is the wrong one. The real question is whether or not other humans have a right to kill them."

I would like to end this speech with the words of French philosopher Albert Camus, "But what then is capital punishment but the most premeditated of murders, to which no criminal's deed, however calculated it may be, can be compared? For there to be equivalence, the death penalty would have to punish a criminal who had warned his victim of the date at which he would inflict a horrible death on him and who, from that moment onward, had confined him at his mercy for months. Such a monster is not encountered in private life." Thank you.