

My name is David Rose, and I am retired from the New Jersey Department of Corrections after a career in corrections that started after I graduated from Florida State University with a degree in Criminology back in 1974. My first job in corrections was as a Correctional Counselor with the Florida Department of Corrections at the Tallahassee Community Correctional Center, a pre-release center for state sentenced inmates nearing the end of their period of incarceration. On my first day on the job I was assigned to take a van full of inmates to the Tallahassee Mall for holiday shopping. Knowing that some of these men were convicted murderers who had spent decades in prison made me worried that they would show up when it came time to return to the Correctional Center and that my career in corrections might be very short. My fears were not realized and I still recall their joy as they shared with each other on the ride back what they had been able to buy for their loved ones.

While the death penalty was not an issue when I started in corrections, by the time I was back in Pennsylvania and working as a Correctional Officer, and later Sergeant, for the Bucks County Department of Corrections it had been reinstated with changes to the law improving the way it was applied as required by Furman vs. Georgia. Bucks County started sentencing inmates to death again and when the prison received an inmate with a sentence of death back from the court, an officer was assigned to monitor him around the clock until the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections would pick him up the following day. I still remember the time that I spent sitting outside the cell of a condemned inmate, thinking of how absurd it was that my employment could one day depend on bringing convicted murderers back from shopping at the mall and another day depend on keeping an inmate alive so that the state could kill them.

Throughout my career in corrections, including my twenty-seven years with the New Jersey Department of Corrections, I have become acquainted with many inmates, some of who have committed heinous crimes. Despite my education and background, I have not been able to find any logical pattern linking the severity of the crime to the length of sentence imposed nor to decisions as to whether an individual would be required to forfeit their life. I concur with the opinion expressed by Supreme Court Justice Henry Blackman when he said "For more than 20 years I have endeavored...to develop...rules that would lend more than the mere appearance of fairness to the death penalty endeavor...Rather than continue to coddle the court's delusion that the desired level of fairness has been achieved...I feel...obligated simply to concede that the death penalty experiment has failed."

Though my career in corrections I have also had the opportunity to meet and speak with a number of Wardens and Commissioners of Corrections. I have not met one who considered the death penalty necessary for the safety of their staff and a number who consider it a waste of money that causes serious security issues when it is actually imposed. I have also become acquainted with wardens who have strong moral objections to the idea of their being responsible for the deliberate and methodical killing of another human being and one who still has nightmares from his participation in an electrocution. Because corrections professionals are public servants required to carry out public policy they are restricted from speaking out in public about their personal opinion regarding the issue of the death penalty, unlike members of the District Attorney's Association whose members' opinions are solicited by lawmakers. I would urge you to include some current correctional professionals in these hearings to hear how important they think the death penalty is to them.

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