

Justice Monologue #1

“The condition of being deserving of something in moral terms, whether good or bad.” The single word, desert, can have what seems like such a simple definition, but as history shows, we as a human race struggle with that concept. As Bryan Stevenson said in the movie *True Justice*, “I think you can be properly convicted, and unfairly sentenced.” I believe for it to be one thing where the actor rightfully should be punished for their actions, but as many stories in our country's history shows, we do not, and still to this day have a flawed system.

A 14 year old black boy by the name of George Stinney had gone through our inequitable system in the year 1944. He was not only starved and forced to write a fake confession for killing two young girls, but then he was wrongfully sentenced and executed for a case that was easily proven incorrectly convicted and simply unjust. After hearing, watching and researching about so many cases similar to George's, where he was wrongfully sentenced for a crime he never committed, mostly because of the fact that the death penalty is more about race and place than it is about true match of the action and actor, I would have to agree with the Dalai Lama when he states in *Compassion and the Question of Justice*, “Remember that even a criminal is a human being, like yourself, and capable of change. Punish the actor in proportion to the misdeed, but do not indulge the desire for vengeance. Think rather of the future, and of how to ensure that the crime is not repeated.” He brings up the idea that each person, no matter their past, has the capacity for change. There are most certainly things that can be done to help one's journey to do so, like restorative justice in jails and prisons, but in the long run, it comes from within. Now part of that process might be giving and receiving forgiveness, but how would one have even a chance to make that change in their lives if it was already taken from them. One can not be released and brought back to the world outside of bars if dead like they can be if they are not put on death row. Not only is death row not giving any sort of chance to a person to change, whether rightfully convicted or not, but it also targets certain groups over others. I believe that one committing a crime should be equally frowned upon as one's life being taken away without a fair trial, especially if proven innocent. If our country as a whole is incapable of facing the legacy of our past, how can it be allowed to continuously target the ones who have been proven to be targeted, and often innocent since the very beginning?