

Dearest Peucinians,

Last time we met do determine whether or not we have a duty toward the planet that bore us. While we need not honor our mother and father, it was determined that we ought to honor Mother Earth. This week we are meeting to discuss a political institution, and one of the oldest ones.

Resolved: Capital Punishment Is Justified in a Democratic Society

Aff: Michael Czerwinski

Neg: صلاح الدين يوسف بن أيوب (Salah a-Din Yususf bin Ayyub)

Our one hundred and thirtieth (triple x!) disputation deals with one of history's favorite plot devices. In Hammurabi's code it is a somewhat favored method of dealing justice, and the death sentence is applied to, among other things: bearing false witness, theft from temples, harboring fugitive slaves, brigandage, stealing furniture from a burning house, running a bar if you are a priestess, being a neglectful wife, and giving people less beer than what they paid for. However we citizens of a liberal democracy like to think we have moved to a better political regime than those established in the Middle Bronze Age. For one, slavery and owning humans is forbidden. However the State seems to some to have ownership over the lives of its citizens and, if a jury of peers decides so, can end the life of a person who is dangerous or has so offended the State that they no longer deserve to live. Whether or not this is a just action is still a

point of contention in America and around the world. Consider the recent problems with carrying out executions since the companies who make a certain drug used in the process in Europe have decided to never export them to the US.

Simone Weil wrote "the coldness of steel is equally mortal at the sword hilt or point". Some who take this to heart would point out the damage that the death penalty does double damage, bringing grief to two families, two networks. They might argue that eye for eye and tooth for tooth is no justice at all, and that to take a life removes all options of reform, of redemption, of choice. Or, rather does a society that relies on support from it's many-footed, many-handed, and many-headed political body have a right to remove the diseased limbs whose actions are pestilence.

When a similar disputation was brought to the table approximately four years ago a line delivered by one Eugene Debs was included in the email from his sedition trial. Here it is included again.

"Your Honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind then that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; and while there is a criminal element, I am of it; and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

Are you willing to consider part of your kin somebody who has been ultimately inhumane, or somebody who has hurt many, or killed many, or been a remarkably destructive force? Do the murderers and thieves, traitors and dictators of

this world have a place still?

Below is a brief list of people who were sentenced to die, consider some of their cases on your way to the table.

Socrates

Saddam Hussein

Adolf Eichmann

Sacco and Vanzetti

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg

Troy Davis

Every single male resident of Milos in 415 BCE

Twenty-two residents of Salem MA.

Jesus of Nazareth

Benito Mussolini

Pericles the Younger

Guy Fawkes

Julius Caesar

Lots of people during the French Revolution (Maximilien Robespierre supposedly had the honor of being guillotined face-up)

Abdul-Rahman (formerly) Peter Kassig

It should be noted that we are examining an ought, and not simply capital punishment as it is in the US today. Leave your statistics at the door.

Please come to the Third floor of Mass Hall at 7:30 on Thursday night. Dress to kill.

Yours,

Aesop

