

Sample Letter to the Editor: One Reason to Oppose the Death Penalty

To the editor:

There are a number of reasons to oppose the death penalty. It is racially and geographically biased. Because it is so much more expensive than life without parole, it diverts precious tax dollars from programs that could keep us safer. And, it drags murder victims' family members through a roller-coaster of endless appeals.

But perhaps the best reason to oppose the death penalty is that, like many government programs, the criminal justice system makes mistakes. So far, at least 123 people that we know of have been released from death row after evidence of their innocence emerged. And we now know, thanks to recent reports by some of our nation's leading newspapers, that at least four people who were executed were almost certainly innocent.

The names of Ruben Cantu, Carlos De Luna, Larry Griffin and Cameron Todd Willingham are not yet seared into our national consciousness. They should be – and, over time, they will be. Cantu, De Luna, Griffin and Willingham – and perhaps other innocents have paid the costliest price indeed for our failed experiment with the death penalty.