

The US Death Penalty Non-Debate

By **Alexander Baron** - Sep 5, 2015



There is a fierce debate raging in America about the death penalty, a perennial issue, though much of this debate is contrived. Yes, it is arguable that a man convicted of one murder should not be executed, and indeed that he should be paroled at some point. There is also too the chance of a miscarriage of justice, but what about serial killers or spree killers, indeed, what about a man who takes two innocent lives and is convicted on overwhelming evidence?

The most high profile such case in the US at the moment is that of **Dylann Roof**, who is alleged to have shot and killed nine innocent strangers in the now notorious Charleston church massacre. If Roof is convicted there are only two arguments that could reasonably be made out against his execution. One is that his state of mind had somehow been

impaired, perhaps by drugs; certainly this is a real possibility, but should it really matter? The other argument is that Roof is a terrorist, and that executing terrorists turns them into martyrs. That would certainly be the case if he were an Islamist, or in a now hopefully bygone era an IRA supporter, but would anyone genuine white separatist consider Roof to be a martyr? If he is convicted, he should be sentenced to death and executed as soon as practicable.

A man who might be considered a fellow traveller of Roof although he is anything but, has recently been convicted of a triple murder. Frazier Glenn Cross (also known as Glenn Miller) is a white supremacist, so-called. Last year he murdered three strangers, one of them a 14 year old boy. Cross has admitted his guilt but says he killed them by mistake, he thought the victims were Jewish. Oh, that's all right then. Now 74, he conducted his own defence, and to the uninitiated his words of defiance may sound as though he is trying to work his ticket by convincing the jury that he is mentally deranged. He isn't, he had just been reading the wrong books. Cross has now been convicted on all counts, but even if he is sentenced to death he is likely to die before he can be executed.

Finally, a man who is not deranged but simply a lowlife. In August 2008, Khadafy Mullens shot three people during a convenience store robbery in Florida, two of them died. Mullens and his accomplice were caught on CCTV; he pleaded guilty. On September 3, an appeal was heard by the Florida Supreme Court when his lawyer **Cynthia Dodge argued** that her client should be spared execution. She may have fared better if she hadn't made a total fool of herself by raising technical issues about the admissibility of the CCTV footage, but it is unlikely. Another member of his legal team, Timothy Freeland, tried to argue that the alleged sexual abuse Mullens suffered as a child was somehow relevant. It is truly amazing how many people – men as well as women – claim to have been sexually abused when they find themselves in deep water with the law, or simply to excuse or rationalise their own reprehensible behaviour. Prostitutes, so-called asylum seekers, false rape accusers, sexual predators, even serial killers trot out this nonsense regular as clockwork.

There is no doubt Mullens did have a tough upbringing and a hard life, but he still chose to enter that convenience store, murder two men in cold blood, and try to kill a third.

Whatever the outcome of this specious appeal, Mullens is unlikely to be executed soon, but neither he nor Dylan Roof or Frazier Cross is deserving of a gramme of mercy.



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