MOVIE – "TOO FLAWED TO FIX: THE ILLINOIS DEATH PENALTY EXPERIENCE" (52 minutes/color and B/W)

SYNOPSIS

"Since 1973 more than 100 people in 25 states have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence. 13 have been from Illinois." These words open this film that condemns the use of capital punishment in the state of Illinois, which remains in effect despite the continued problems of convicting the innocent. Several innocent men recount their experiences of prosecution, conviction, incarceration, and exoneration, and in the process reveal the injustices and outright horrors sometimes associated with criminal justice system in Illinois.

Arguments in favor of using capital punishment are refuted with statistics, raw facts, and testimony from experts, convicted men, and the families of both convicted men and of murder victims. This film paints a picture of a capital punishment process that is racially discriminatory, biased against the indigent, economically inefficient, and wholly unnecessary. Families of victims do not find closure, potential killers are not deterred, money is not saved by executing prisoners, and minorities and the poor are much more likely to wind up on death row. Ultimately, no system could ever completely guard against executions of the innocent because no perfect system could ever be designed by imperfect humanity.

OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using capital punishment.

2. Describe alternatives to execution for crimes that currently are eligible for the death penalty.

3. Explain why a confession of a crime is not necessarily proof of that crime.

4. Identify factors that can bias the criminal justice system against minorities and the poor.

5. Explain why claims that a family will receive "closure" if the murderer of their loved one is executed do not deliver what they promise.

6. Describe the challenges faced by individuals who are exonerated after spending years incarcerated on death row.

7. Identify the motivations that police and prosecutors may have to push for convicting individuals they know or suspect may be innocent.

8. Identify the motivations for judges to stand by capital punishment sentences, even when mitigating or exonerating evidence is made apparent.

9. Identify the motivations defense attorneys may have to avoid assisting those on death row to be released.

10. Discuss the emotional components of capital cases that evoke a need to execute individuals convicted of murder.

QUESTIONS

1. What factors might result in a signed criminal confession that is not true?

2. Why would people confess to crimes that they did not commit?

3. What safeguards or improvements to the criminal justice system can be implemented to protect the innocent from being executed?

4. What practical reasons are there for continued use of capital punishment in Illinois?

5. Of the exonerated men shown in this film, what discrepancy is apparent between men who are white and men who are black?

6. Assuming that the individual is exonerated while still alive, what support does the state of Illinois provide for those wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death?

7. What legal options does and individual on death row have if evidence of their innocence transpires after their conviction?

8. If the US Supreme Court ruled all death penalties to be unconstitutional, by what methods could death penalties be reinstated?

9. How might politicians present alternatives to capital punishment in a manner so that the majority of the public no longer sees the need for the death penalty?

10. What repercussions are there for prosecutors, police officers, and judges who knowingly arrest, prosecute, and sentence innocent people?