Washington State Ended the Death Penalty –
For the Same Reasons the Death Penalty Can and Should End in Your State

In October 2018, the Washington state supreme court said unanimously that state’s death penalty law was invalid because defendants of color were four times more likely to be sentenced to death for comparable crimes. They said, “we are confident that the association between race and the death penalty is not attributed to random chance.”¹

If the data were analyzed in your state, it would likely show that, while murder victims are disproportionately people of color, the majority of death sentences are imposed for killing white victims.² The death penalty would be exposed as an arbitrary and racist relic in your state, just as it was here in Washington.

Black lives don’t matter in the administration of the death penalty – at least, they don’t matter as much as white lives.

The evidence presented to the Washington court also showed that there were a handful of what are sometimes called “outlier death penalty counties.” These few counties didn’t have the most murders, or the worst murders, but they produced almost all the death sentences. The law is not applied fairly and equally across the state.³

You can read the court’s opinion and the supporting data at http://www.courts.wa.gov/appellate_trial_courts/SupremeCourt/?fa=supremecourt.StatevGregory

The decisionmakers who can hear and act on this message won’t be the same in every state. In some states, as in Washington, it will be a court. In other states it will be the governor, or the legislature, or local district attorneys. Federal judges can’t stop your state from ending the death penalty. This March, California Governor Newsom relied on the same kind of evidence to stop all executions and committed himself to work to abolish the death penalty completely.

In every state, vigorous advocacy by activists like you is essential to making decisionmakers – whoever they are – listen to the facts about the death penalty.

You can help take this important victory from Washington state back home to where you live.

² http://www.naacp.org/latest/naacp-death-penalty-fact-sheet/
³ https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/twopercent

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