

## **Death be not proud, Prop. 62 just as cruel**

California's Proposition 62 is a decree of death, anguish and inhumanity. No form of execution is acceptable, not even in a presumed attempt to choose the lesser of two evils.

California voters need to know that lethal injection is arguably a more humane method of execution than the alternative method Prop. 62 proposes: Life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) — the slow death penalty, life without hope.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that life without the hope of parole is inhumane; they outlawed the practice. No-parole sentences are extremely rare in the rest of the free world — fewer than 120 estimated cases — because being forced to exist with the absence of hope is cruel and unusual punishment; only the truly irredeemable are denied parole.

In the U.S., where we have an unprecedented 50,000 LWOP inmates, it's no wonder the suicide rate among them is incredibly high.

Voters who oppose the death penalty as inhumane should realize that what Prop. 62 would accomplish is simply to add to the growing number — 5,000 men and women in California — of those already enduring this hopelessly cruel form of execution. Prop. 62 would effectively seal the fate of current California LWOP prisoners, and kill the scant hope produced by Senate Bills SB9 and SB260, which made parole possible for LWOP juveniles.

LWOP seniors, who have served decades behind bars and have proven their rehabilitation, and have long been engaged in the struggle to abolish life without the possibility of parole sentences, were afforded a glimmer of hope. A hope Prop. 62 is proposing to quash. Special circumstances stand on very technical elements of crime that distinguish prison sentences of life with parole and life without.

In fact, LWOP prisoners used to have parole hearing dates, an opportunity to demonstrate their rehabilitation. The grim reality of Prop 62 is that LWOP prisoners "are never eligible for parole. They spend the rest of their lives in prison and they die in prison." As written in Prop. 62, the word "never" is strategically underlined, an added detail to attract the unions that benefit from mass incarceration and long-term sentences. Phrases such as "severely punished" were added to please those haters who thrive on the pain and suffering of others. No ink was wasted on the word "rehabilitation." The death penalty does not need this misguided initiative. The death

penalty is dying and has been on its way out for some time now. Voters should beware of the glory grabbers who are misrepresenting Prop. 62 in a misguided attempt to seize the moment before it's too late to claim credit for championing the end of the death penalty.

The advent of Prop. 66 was a stroke of luck for those pushing Prop. 62. Prop. 66 basically proposes to speed up the death penalty process. If passed, it is unlikely to pass court challenges. Not a single soul would perish because of Prop 66. But it serves as the perfect diversion for the sleight-of-hand trick that's being performed on the unsuspecting public with Prop. 62. The attention junkies will have their moment at any cost. They don't appear to care about the men and women who will die slow, tortuous deaths in prison because of Prop. 62, nor the families of those incarcerated.

They do not seem to be interested in the research and studies that conclude the majority of the safest inmates overall were once those considered to be the most dangerous.

Of the 860 people convicted of murder who were released between 1995 and March 2011, only five were returned to prison — none of them for murder, attempted murder, or assault and/or battery.

This is from the California Department of Corrections own 2011 Adult Institutions Outcome Evaluation Report. Prisoners are not a greater risk to public safety simply because they carry a sentence of life without parole. In most cases the "worst of the worst" eventually become the "safest of the safe." In regard to parole and release from prison, aging LWOP prisoners are even less likely to commit a violent crime than the average person on the street.

As an LWOP prisoner, I wish more people would look into these studies that were conducted by Stanford Law School, by the Justice Policy Institute, by the Public Police Institute of California, by Human Rights Watch, by the Vera Institute.

Life without hope/possibility of parole is not the answer to the death penalty. This inhumane sentence has become an epidemic that is perverting the American justice system across the nation.

The ACLU has reported that upward of 3,200 U.S. citizens are serving LWOP sentences for non-violent crimes.

Public beware: The vainglorious Proposition 62 is a lethal farce, and a slap in the face of humanity.