

Paul Ezra Rhoades will not be missed

By Henry D. Johnston Moscow-Pullman Daily News | [0 comments](#)

For the first time in 17 years, the state of Idaho carried out the sentence of a death row inmate when Paul Ezra Rhoades was executed Friday. His sentence was, in my opinion, fair for the kidnapping and murder of two female victims and, by extension, the male victim he murdered, for which he only received a life sentence

For weeks, photos of Idaho's new execution chamber, along with sordid details of how lethal injection is carried out, have circulated on the Web. I've learned quite a bit about how last-minute appeals are filed, how the first of three injections renders the condemned unconscious so they don't feel the next two fatal shots that stop their breathing and heartbeat. The whole process is very clinical, very sterile and, providing nothing goes awry, painless for the condemned.

The whole ordeal has also made me revisit my stance on capital punishment. I was raised in my faith that although God is the ultimate judge and will have the final ruling, society has a duty to carry out punishments for the good of greater society. As I've gotten older and explored my faith further, I realize there are basic tenets of human decency that one must adhere to. When you commit a crime contrary to the core of those tenets, you forfeit your place in society.

I've read arguments that if we are to continue using the death penalty, lethal injection is the correct method as it ensures the process is humane. I agree that capital punishment should never have vengeful intent, as it would if the sentence were carried out by a friend or family member of the victim. However, it was said after Friday's execution that witnesses were only allowed to see Rhoades once he was strapped down to the death table in order to "maintain his dignity."

I am torn as to why our system should maintain the dignity of those who were unable to do the same. Did Rhoades maintain the dignity of his victims when he kidnapped, raped and killed them? Were they allowed to die peacefully after being injected with a sedative that rendered them unconscious? Were their bodies quietly whisked away for burial without being poked, prodded, photographed and autopsied?

The answer to all those questions is a firm and resounding "no."

So why was Rhoades allowed to die in a white walled, fluorescent lit room, in a way that eliminated the conscious sting of death? But more importantly why, after all the evil he inflicted on this world, was he granted one iota of media coverage at his death?

I have thought executions should be carried out in such a way they inflict a small amount of conscious, physical pain on the condemned before death. Death by firing squad seems to be the most popular option as there's a certain level of finality to the whole process,

instead of lethal injection, which lets criminals pass in their sleep like members of polite society.

Rhoades was anything but a member of polite society and he forfeited his place when he killed those young girls. Now, whether he should have spent the rest of his life in prison or been executed cannot be dissected and determined in the few words I have for this column.

I am, for now, still in favor of capital punishment. As much as my blood boils when I think of killers like Rhoades and the media attention he received at his death, I know that for our society to continue to use the death penalty, such sentences must continue to be carried out as publicly as possible, with the media watching and reporting every detail.

Distasteful as it may be, if Idaho officials claim they were carrying out a sentence on behalf of the public good, the public needs to be aware of the process.

So good riddance and goodbye to Paul Ezra Rhoades. You, sir, will not be missed.

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