

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

A Reference Handbook

Michael Kronenwetter

CONTEMPORARY WORLD ISSUES



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From the beginning of our Nation, the punishment of death has stirred acute public controversy. Although pragmatic arguments for and against the punishment have been frequently advanced, this longstanding and heated controversy cannot be explained solely as the result of differences over the practical wisdom of a particular government policy. At bottom, the battle has been waged on moral grounds. The country has debated whether a society for which the dignity of the individual is the supreme value can, without a fundamental inconsistency, follow the practice of deliberately putting some of its members to death.

Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, in his concurring opinion in the case of Furman v. Georgia, 408 U.S. 238, 257 (1972).