



Executed on a Technicality: Lethal Injustice on America's Death Row

David R. Dow

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When David Dow took his first capital case, he supported the death penalty. He changed his position as the men on death row became real people to him, and as he came to witness the profound injustices they endured: from coerced confessions to disconcertingly incompetent lawyers; from racist juries and backward judges to a highly arbitrary death penalty system.

It is these concrete accounts of the people Dow has known and represented that prove the death penalty is consistently unjust, and it's precisely this fundamental-and lethal-injustice, Dow argues, that should compel us to abandon the system altogether.

Executed on a Technicality: Lethal Injustice on America's Death Row Details

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Erica says

Phenomenal book that delves into a complex topic. David Dow does an outstanding job of addressing the wide array of viewpoints and issues surrounding America's death penalty. He offers a knowledgeable and honest opinion on the death penalty, and includes some repulsive facts and statistics that will rock you to your core. It isn't an easy read (emotionally), but is fairly quick (literally) as it caps at a little over 230 pages. This is a book everyone should have to make time to read, if only to begin to conceptualize the system our society has created, and the lethal consequences it creates. Highlighted quotes: "We do not have a fair system, and when you try over a period of thirty years to make a system fair and you still fail, it is time to conclude that the system cannot be made fair" and "It decided, in other words, to endorse the personalization of violence rather than to explain the difference between anger and justice"

Nancy says

Excellent look at the death penalty. Inside specific cases where the law did not work. Very hard to read.

Meaghan says

A persuasive argument against the death penalty, with details that will and should horrify people. It includes more details about the actual legal processes and precedents involved than the other book by him that I read, *The Autobiography of an Execution*. I'd give this one five stars but for the fact that it's very repetitive; the same facts get mentioned in several different chapters. I think perhaps a lot of what's in this book came out of articles Dow wrote previously, which would explain the repetition.

Kate says

David Dow refocuses the issue of the injustice of the death penalty, not on whether innocent people are being put to death, but on how people are being denied justice in the path to their own executions. He is fairly ruthless in his views of supreme court decisions. He uses anecdotes of several of his own death-row-inmate clients and discusses legal precedents affecting rulings on petitions filed on their behalves. The legal writing is fairly accessible to the layperson; Dow shows himself not only to be a good person and a good lawyer, but a good author - and does attempt to explain what is going on, step by step. I found it to be a fascinating read, especially since he is Houston-based. I'd recommend it to anyone.

Mary says

I first heard of David Dow on NPR radio. He was giving an interview discussing this

Book. I was so intrigued that I spent 20 minutes in my car after I got home listening to him. I went inside immediately and bought it and one other by him. I am about halfway through it. It has been slow reading for me. I am a lay person and am not familiar with the legal terminology. He does an excellent job defining terms and explaining laws. I find this book informative and very enlightening. I am right wing conservative in favor of the death penalty. This book has taught me about the imperfections in our system. Things do need to be changed and now. I'm sure I'll have more input when I finish the book.

Lisa Ross says

The author, David Dow, a professor at the University of Houston Law Center and founder of the Texas Innocence Network, has penned an excellent argument of how America's death penalty should be nonexistent. He's a former death row attorney who worked in the system for 15 years. He highlights a few cases, and although I'm not an expert at the process of law, I felt like I had a much better grip on what it takes to execute someone. The book is well written and concise, without being preachy. He points out how if one is poor (and a minority), and unable to afford decent legal council one is basically screwed by our 'justice' system. A terribly sad book to read on many levels, but very eye opening about our legal system.

Mor says

This book gives 13 reasons why the death penalty should be abolished. Anyone who is curious about Texas' cruel death penalty system should read on.

Kenneth Barber says

The author of this book teaches law at the University of Houston. He also works for a nonprofit organization that defends death row inmates. He describes several cases in which he defended an inmate facing execution. He follows the process of appeals in both state and federal courts. He describes the way the court system, especially the Supreme Court, have changed the process of appeals and made it harder for the condemned to appeal their cases successfully. The Supreme Court in particular has made the appeal process more about procedures than innocence or the violation of the accused's civil rights. It was a rude awakening to me that even if the convicted could prove that his constitutional rights had been violated or that he is actually innocent, he may not have the opportunity to present his case. The system is no longer based on the rule of law and the quest for justice. The right to a fair trial is no longer quarantined. He also discusses how race and economic standing discriminates against minorities and the poor when the author began defending death row inmates, he favored its use. It once he saw how it was administered his view has changed. He now believes that it should be abolished. Interesting and disheartening look at our legal system.

Zach says

David R. Dow's *Executed on a Technicality: Lethal Injustice on America's Death Row* is an interesting, well constructed, and infuriating account of the series of incompetent lawyers, ridiculous laws, and society's routine dismissal of prisoners that makes up the American death penalty system. Dow, a death row attorney himself, recounts several cases he has worked on with clarity and lots of explanation. He manages to mostly avoid digressing into the morals of capital punishment, and instead presents a level-headed, highly fact based argument. His prose is sometimes repetitive or overworked, but more often than not, the book succeeds in illuminating the huge injustices found in today's legal system.
