

David Kaczynski Speaks at the Montana Senate Death Penalty Hearing

David Kaczynski

Up until 1995, my views on capital punishment were theoretical. I never imagined that one day I'd have a personal confrontation with the capital punishment system.

But that fateful day came in September of 1995, when my dear wife Linda suggested that my estranged.

Older brother Ted, then living in Montana, might be the notorious Unabomber.

At first I seriously simply could not believe that Ted was capable of harming anyone.

Although I knew that he was mentally ill, I had never seen any signs of violence in him.

But as Linda and I poured over the Unabombers published manifesto, I began to confront the reality that my brother Ted might be the Unabomber.

We soon found ourselves facing a terrible dilemma where any choice we made could easily result in someone's death. If we did nothing, Ted might kill again.

On the other hand, if we handed him over to the FBI, he could be executed. I had to ask myself what it would be like to go through life with my own brother's blood on my hands.

At the time, it disturbed me greatly that the price of doing the right thing might be my brother's execution.

I wanted to make a life affirming choice, but the death penalty put me in a position where any choice I made could lead to someone's death.

I also had to grapple with the effect of the death penalty on someone else.

Our elderly mother won.

I experienced first hand what the murderer and the executioner both failed to see, that the person killed is usually survived by family members who suffer much much more.

I feel tremendously lucky that Ted did not get the death penalty, but I can.

Tell you with absolute.

Certainty that if he had been executed, the person suffering the greatest agony would not have been Ted.

It would have been our mother, Wanda.

Our decision to turn Ted in was based on the belief that we were morally obliged to do whatever we could to stop the violence.

10 years later, we stand by our decision.

It brought an end to the Unabomber 17 year reign of Terror, which left three people dead and many others injured.

We probably saved lives.

We'd also like to believe that we set a positive example for other families facing similar dilemmas.

Over the next two years, I witnessed first-hand how the criminal justice system works.

The US Justice Department promised to protect our privacy. Instead, we were swamped with media attention on the day of Ted's arrest and for months afterwards personally.

We shared in confidence with the FBI end up in the New York Times. Prosecutors solemnly promised to make a fair and impartial evaluation of my brother's mental condition, but instead they recruited a hired gun legal expert to provide psychiatric testimony.

In my brother's case.

Ted's life wasn't was not spared because he's any sicker than 100 mentally ill people that have been executed in the United States since 19.

92 His life was spared because he had the good fortune to receive great attorneys, great legal representation.

I began to see the criminal justice system as an imperfect system run by fallible human beings.

From the moment of a suspect's arrest, that to the condemned man, final breath, the process is influenced by so many variables, so many subjective judgments, that inconsistent results are practically guaranteed. As a result, we have a death penalty that disproportionately impacts.

The poor people of color and mentally challenged.

It's probably an empty exercise to debate whether capital punishment is ever justified.

I do believe that reasonable people can disagree about this philosophical question.

But no reasonable person who truly understands how the current system functions can, in my opinion, claim that it represents justice.

Do we really want a death penalty that is applied unfairly and that risks executing the innocent?

A perfect system is unattainable.

But a marginally better system would operate more slowly, cost more, and execute fewer people it faked.

Makes far more sense, in my opinion, to devote limited public resources to effective law enforcement.

Do we want more lawyers arguing in court?

Or more police on the street.

Do we want longer trials or better victim services?

In the real world, these are the choices we must make. These are the choices that you, as members of the Judiciary Committee, face as you consider Bill #306.

Linda and I made our choice when we turned in someone we loved to the FBI.

In doing so, we made a difficult yet responsible, life affirming choice.

The same deeply held values now prompt us to speak against the death penalty.

We made sacrifices to protect people we didn't know.

In doing so, we also made a statement about the kind of world.

We want to leave to our children a world where violence is truly a last resort, a world where decency and humanity come first.

Thank you.

The Ted K Archive

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0JtlwEJ2ls>

www.thetedkarchive.com