

5 Reasons to Oppose the Execution of Vernon Evans



1. Vernon has always maintained his innocence.

The State's case is full of holes. The only eyewitness to the shooting stated that Vernon was not the killer. Other witnesses disagreed about how tall the shooter was, what he was wearing, and where each witness was at the time of the crime. Also, the State's main witness, Vernon's girlfriend, received a deal from prosecutors in exchange for her testimony.

2. Maryland's death penalty is racist.

Vernon's case reflects a disturbing pattern on Maryland's death row in which poor blacks accused of killing whites are sent to death row more often than others accused of similar crimes. In 2003, a Governor-commissioned study performed at the University of Maryland found that "blacks who kill whites are 2 1/2 times more likely to be sentenced to death than are whites who kill whites, 3 1/2 times more likely than are blacks who kill blacks, and almost 11 times more likely to be sentenced to death than 'other' racial combinations."

3. Vernon was denied a fair trial.

Prosecutors, without justification, used 80% (8 out of 10) of their 'strikes' to prevent black jurors from serving on the jury before the trial. As a result, the final jury only had two black members. Prosecutors also withheld evidence that would have cast doubt on Vernon's guilt, including the testimony of three witnesses whose testimony indicates Vernon was not the shooter.

4. Vernon received inadequate representation at trial.

Vernon, like the vast majority of death row inmates, was too poor to afford an attorney. His court-appointed attorney failed to interview or present the testimony of the sole eyewitness to the shooting.

5. Vernon was already serving a life sentence when he was given a death sentence.

Vernon underwent two separate trials for the crime he is accused of. The first was in federal court; the second was in Maryland court. The federal court sentenced Vernon to life plus 20 years making it highly unlikely that he would ever be eligible for parole. Nonetheless, Maryland prosecutors tried him again at great time and expense and sought the death sentence against him. Furthermore, several jury members later stated that they would not have voted in favor of Vernon's death sentence if they had had the option of life without parole.