

## CIVIL DEATH AND MORAL CONVICTION TEACHING DEATH AS A CONCEPT

BY Timothy J. Muise

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Messages are powerful, both direct and subtle. This is especially true when we are directing these messages at our yet to be molded youth. In this country we are sending both direct and subtle messages to our children that in many instances it is acceptable to kill. The end result of these messages is that we have children who are killing each other. Killing each other because they live on different streets or because they like different sports teams. It has become easy for our children to kill because we as adults have sent them the message that sometimes it is OK.

By what vehicles are these messages conveyed? One is certainly by this country's willingness to fight war in some far off land. We will kill hundreds of thousands of individuals, men, women, and children who had lives of meaning, but whom we portray as the enemy or victims of collateral damage. The news media paints the picture, our youth absorb it, and they subconsciously retain the attitude killing can be justified. This vehicle may not be as effective due to the fact that it can be harder to paint unknown persons as evil or less than. Many of our media savvy youth know that our enemies are not always the devil incarnate, but if they are inundated with enough negative images they could be swayed to believe people of different creeds, colors, or religions are not as worthy of life as are the freedom loving citizens of this land, so they must be deserving of bombing or urban attacks. Some kids buy into it, some don't.

A much more effective vehicle for instilling the attitude that killing can be justified is the death penalty, both in its traditional role of executions and in its less recognized form of "civil death" as manifested in life without parole (LWOP) and long term (LT) prison sentences. It is much easier for our youth to wrap their head around the killing of an evil prisoner. They envision the stereotypical tattooed member of the Aryan Brotherhood or 6', 6" Big Bubba of many movies. These "rapists and murderers" are much easier to kill, and even easier to justify the killing of, and it instills that lack of respect for life, for the greater karmic disaster that lack of respect affords, that is responsible for our children shooting each other in the streets. Many people ask themselves, "What is wrong with these kids today?", well the answer is that we have taught them to discount human life. It is our fault, we as a society, and the burden is upon us to correct this societal failure which will eventually lead to the fall of this modern day Rome. We fiddle like Nero as our state burns.

The common definition of "civil death" in prison refers to the burdens that are placed upon an "ex-con". In some states it is near impossible to secure a real "taxpaying" job as the background checks and applications emphasize the past. Of course an employee has the right to be cautious, to protect his livelihood, but does not that same employer owe some debt to the restoration of society? When we are able to change the public attitude toward the previously incarcerated we will then be able to change the statistics related to recidivism and crime. I herein want to also expand upon that limited



definition of "civil death" by including the death of our value system when we treat a class of persons different from another. To make men who have served prison time pariahs works to erode the social fabric of our entire society. To place a scarlet letter upon even the worst offenders can only work to deepen the abyss that they are tossed into when released from prison. Of course we must protect the children from pedophiles, no one would argue against that, but when someone who has been convicted of such a deviant crime is in fact released to our cities and towns does not the burden fall upon us to use the best available tools to ensure they commit no further crimes? To banish them from our neighborhoods and deny them their due civil rights is a iron clad guarantee that they will reoffend. When that happens does society have some of the blame on its shoulders? I say that they do. It must be noted that strict laws are imposed to deter such serious crimes, and most feel that is required, but the sad fact is that these laws always bleed through to the less serious crimes and our politicians use sensationalized tough on crime platforms to catch the ire of the public in a voter motivation attack. The problem is they use the band aid fix and never talk about the long-term solutions.

Everything I have covered here ultimately teaches "death" as a concept. A concept that diminishes human life in order to attempt to reach a goal that is unachievable through that vehicle. You cannot stop murder by killing murderers. You cannot cure errants by making them outcasts. You cannot shape caring youth by teaching hate. The tenets are clear. Love breeds compassion. Understanding sows real forgiveness. Second chances heal deep societal wounds. We will never end war with war. How much longer will we continue to send our young men to distant lands, teach them that a class of people are their enemy, and then ask them to kill with no effect on their psyche? We are seeing the damage everyday. We teach death and our kids are killing each other.

The war in vietnam was ended because the people took to the streets. The photo of the young girl burned from napalm and running down a dirt road brought the message home. The power of an injured child made many leave the comfort of their homes and join the anti-war "movement". This is exactly what we need today. That injured youth which will become todays poster child must be the killings in our streets. It must be the drug use which is ever increasing in this generation. It must be the millions of homeless and abused babes, and it must be the child in your city and town who is being failed by teaching them death. You are the one who must take to the streets. It has to start with the man in the mirror to say no more killing. No more death penalty. No more war. No more civil death. Take action today. Please contact us to be connected to the MOVEMENT in today's streets. We can end the wars!

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