Citizens Must Realize Consequences of Their Actions

Chuang, from page 4

as well as the fact that the prions are over-crowded. However, it should not be over-looked that often, criminals are given sus-pended or shortened sentences because prisons are overcrowded.

Fundamentally, it is unfair for a person to take someone's life without just cause, and merely go to jail for it. Take the case of Shon McHugh. He killed another human being. McHugh was reportedly under the influence of alcohol and/or marijuana. He and his two friends accosted Yngve K. Raustein '94 and Arne Fredheim G. The rest of the story is his- tory. If someone does something, he is oblig- ed to do so responsibility, and realize and han-dle the consequences. Assuming the report to be true, McHugh was under the influence. Anyone that smokes, drinks, or takes drugs ought to realize that he is responsible for his behavior afterwards. McHugh stabbed Raustein. By carrying a knife, McHugh took the responsibility of arming himself, and by using it, McHugh shouldered the accompanying responsibilites.

Did McHugh realize the potential implic-a-tions that smoking, drinking, and brandishing a weapon before doing so that evening over a year ago? Before he set out that (or any other) night, he, like any other human being, should, if that person can't handle the responsibility, then he shouldn't begin in the first place. Put another way, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

McHugh was tried as a juvenile (he was not yet sixteen years of age at the time of the incident) without a jury. He was sentenced to twenty years in prison. He is scheduled to serve time in the juvenile prison until he is twenty-one, and then he will be transferred to the adult prison. Twenty years of prison is a rather west sentence. Especially considering his attitude throughout the incident and in the courtroom. He reportedly bragged to his friends that night how he thrust the blade all the way through Raustein's body. In court he said that Raustein impaled himself.

What kind of demoted attitude and lack of respect toward human life is this? What is spending twenty years in prison going to do for McHugh? For our society? Is McHugh going to be effectively counseled during his sentence? Will anyone care after him at all in the humanistic sense? Will he realize the magni-tude of his actions? Even if any of this hap-pens, the fundamental issue is this: He acted irresponsibly, he killed someone. Period. He deserves what he dished out to his victim - death. Alongside the "eye-for-an-eye" rule has always been the Golden Rule - "do unto oth-ers as you would have them do unto you." Criminals seem to forget this second rule: I can't imagine that criminals would want to be subjected to their own crimes.

Another case reveals the atrocities of human behavior. On Oct. 11, a 15-year-old Rochester boy killed his parents and his 11-year-old sister with a handgun. According to The Boston Globe report, Gerald McCra stole his grandfather's handgun, murdered his mother in the kitchen, and then his father and sister who were in the car, ready to depart for a birthday party. All were shot in the head. McCra then drove the corpses to the nearby woods. When the police came, McCra "led them from a bloody hallway to two windows broken from the outside, suggesting that bur- glars had moved the house."

So far, no trial dates or conditions have been announced. Even then, what good will a trial do? McCra is known to have a history of misbehavior and bad family relations. Nothing can be done to bring back his mother, father, and sister. McCra obviously acted in an irrespon-sible manner. Although it may (and prob-ably will be) argued that McCra is too young to know what he was doing, that no one would have guessed that he would have done some-thing this extreme, that he can still be reached out to, it seems silly to pursue such arguments. He killed three human beings. He was related to them. It is said that he had problems with them. He is reportedly under treatment for hypervisitly and his medication apparently is charged as contributing to violent behavior. If he is not sentenced to death, he will probably be issued a sentence similar to McHugh's - go to jail for a long time, if not the rest of his life. Is it worthwhile to keep anyone in jail for sentences of such duration? McHugh and McCra would undoubtedly be sub- jected to the harsh realities of prison life, and what kind of future will be ahead of them if they are released in twenty or thirty years? Quality of life after prison is not the issue though. It is terribly inefficient (in fact, waste-ful) to incarcerate someone for so long. Cur- rent conditions are not the issue either. The simple issue is this - these criminals mur-dered their fellow human beings. Although there are many cases in which the death penal-ty is of questionable use (e.g. domestic vio- lence, self-defense), some scenarios definitely warrant the expedient use of the death penalty. By buckling down on such discipline, sev- eral things may happen. First, criminals will get what they deserve in the context of this piece. Secondly, justice will be better served for the victim. Someone from Baker House (where Raustein lived) said that since McHugh was found guilty and will serve twenty years in jail, "Justice is served." To me, for justice to be served completely, McHugh would have to be walking with a friend and attacked the same way he attacked Raustein. That way, he can experience the same emotions, fears, and results that Raustein may have experienced. I feel that all such criminals should experience what they put others through. Obviously, this is not at all feasible. The use of the death penalty would come closer to equalizing the issue than cur-rent jailing practices do.

If people followed the Golden Rule and thought about whether or not they would want the same thing to happen to them, much crime would probably not occur. By punishing people quickly and seriously, potential criminals may think again before committing a crime. Awareness of the consequences is not to be interpreted as a fear, but rather, as a more effective way to deter people from the life of crime, whatever its form.

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