

# Execution fuels death penalty debate

by Matt Campbell  
Staff Writer

The state of Georgia may have just executed an innocent man. Amid chants of "I am Troy Davis," mourners laid to rest Saturday a man executed last week for the 1989 murder of an off-duty police officer.

The recent eventful execution of Troy Davis has drawn much attention to the death penalty debate, and the constitutionality of capital punishment. Former President Jimmy Carter is calling for a repeal of the death penalty, blasting it as "unjust and outdated." In a statement to the Associated Press he said he hopes "this tragedy will spur us as a nation toward the total rejection of capital punishment." Amnesty International, an NGO, is encouraging people to sign an online petition to abolish the death penalty, and activist filmmaker Michael Moore is calling for an economic boycott of Georgia.

On the other hand, Dr. John McAdams from the Department of Political Science at Marquette University views the death penalty not as a constitutional hurdle, but as a matter of deterrence. "If we execute murderers and there is in fact no deterrent effect, we have killed a bunch of murderers," Dr. McAdams is quoted as saying on the website, ProDeathPenalty.com. "If we fail to execute murderers, and doing so would in fact have deterred other murders, we have allowed the killing of a bunch of innocent victims. I would much rather risk the former. This, to me, is not a tough call."

Proponents of the death penalty point out that many innocent people have been on death row and there is the likelihood that innocent people have been executed. Since 1973, 130 people have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence. Meanwhile, 1,271 executions have gone through since 1976 according to the Death Penalty Information Center ([www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)) Davis's case has drawn criticism and international attention from politicians and leaders because there was doubt that Davis

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was the man who pulled the trigger. At trial, guilt must be proven "beyond a reasonable doubt." In 1991, when Davis was convicted, the jury was convinced of his guilt. Though many years later, seven of the nine eyewitnesses who testified against Davis recanted their testimonies, and questions concerning ballistic evidence have been raised.

This recent evidence caused many to wonder why Mr. Davis was even on death row at all. Supporters of Mr. Davis spent the weeks before his execution trying every avenue to force another stay.

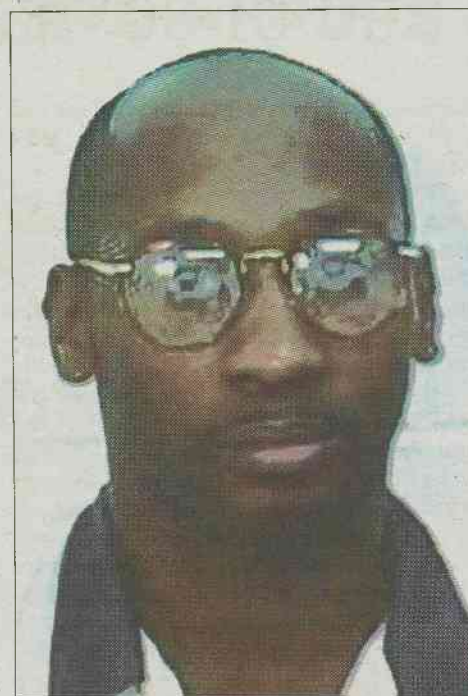
Dr. Cary Adkinson, assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Justice, thinks Georgia went ahead with the execution because the powers-that-be didn't want to admit error.

"I think it has a lot to do with the fallout that can happen when you admit you make mistakes as an authority," Dr. Adkinson said. "Especially when you're the criminal justice system that's supposed to be the main way people get fairness and justice when things go wrong in our society."

"There is the legal case, the case in court, and the public relations case," said Spencer Lawton, the former Chatham County prosecutor in an interview with CNN. "We have consistently won the case as it has been presented in court. We have consistently lost the case as it has been presented in the public realm, on TV and elsewhere."

However, defense attorneys argue they had presented enough evidence to show reasonable doubt.

"We believe that we've established substantial doubt in this case," Stephen Marsh,



Troy Davis

photo courtesy of <http://troyanthonydavis.org/>

Davis's attorney, said at the time, according to an interview with CNN. "And given the level of doubt that exists in this case, we believe that an execution is simply not appropriate."

Despite efforts, the execution did go through September 21. Troy Davis, who was convicted of killing off-duty police officer, Mark MacPhail, was put to death by lethal injection at a Jackson, Georgia prison after the U.S. Supreme Court denied a final request for a stay. At 10:53 p.m. the lethal cocktail was administered, and at 11:08 p.m. he was pronounced dead. He did not eat his last meal, or take the anti-anxiety medication he was offered. Maintaining his innocence to the very end, his last words were "may God bless your souls." The scene outside of the Jackson prison was tense. Riot police were ready for action as a crowd of more than 500 demonstrators, wearing blue-shirts plastered with "I

## Death Penalty by the Numbers

- 56 percent of executed criminals were white, 35 percent were black, and 7 percent were Hispanic.

- 76 percent of victims in death penalty cases were white, 15 percent were black, and 6 percent were Hispanic.

- Texas leads all states with 475 executions since 1976. North Carolina by comparison has had 43. Six states, including South Dakota and Colorado have only had one execution in that time span.

- 88 percent of criminologists think that the death penalty as a deterrent doesn't lower homicide rates.

- The most common method of execution is lethal injection, which was used in 86 percent of executions.

Source: Death Penalty Information Center, [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)

am Troy Davis," provided support for Davis.

The Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects citizens from "cruel and unusual punishment."

The execution of Troy Davis has many questioning the constitutionality of capital punishment. North Carolina, along with 33 other states, allow the death penalty. There are 165 offenders on North Carolina's death row, and since 1976, the state has executed 43 offenders. Seemingly the debate will continue.

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## GRADUATION from page 2

courses, as well as how many hours one must take, in order to graduate in four years.

"The order is advisor/chair, then the cashier to pay the fee, the department to do the audit, and then the graduation application," said Mrs. Coleman.

Students need to talk to their department chairs and their advisors. Information that is needed from them are what classes should they take, and for transfer students for them to find out what classes are transferable towards getting their degrees. Substitutes are sometimes allowed in which students are given credit for one class that is similar or equal to another class.

One of the major problems for students is that they do not know who to go to.

"I don't know my department chair, but I know my advisor," said Latisha Edwards, junior biotech major. However, Ms. Edwards feels her advisor helps her with everything she needs.

This is one of the reasons why it is vital that students find out who their advisor is and make contact with them as soon as possible. It is advised for students to meet their advisors as early as freshmen year, because they can offer the most assistance.

"They kind of sit you down and say, 'Why are you taking that for?' and to make sure

you are taking the right classes," said Felicia White, junior forensics science major.

Some students feel that meeting with your advisor and other informational events, should be made a mandatory event, such as Vanessa Bleviens, a junior biology major.

No matter which direction you go first, students should remember that everything goes right back to the undergraduate catalogue.

"Essentially the catalogue is your bible," said Mrs. Coleman. "Our job is to verify the records."

Students should check their emails regularly and make sure that they pay attention to deadlines for the application process.