

English Composition Unit 2  
Discussion Board  
Holly Hutchinson

Here is my summary and response of R.P. Allen's 2004 article, "A Matter of Evidence," which is cited fully below.

### **Objective Summary**

Allen (2004) cites Bureau of Prisons statistics that show more than 100 people on death row have been cleared of the charges they were convicted for. However, none of the 1,005 people who have been put to death since the death sentence was re-established in 1976 have been proved innocent using DNA. **My thesis:** Misleading statistics like these are used to continue the barbaric practice of capital punishment.

### **My Response**

I was frightened when reading this article to learn that over 100 people on death row have been found to be innocent. Is this just the tip of the iceberg? If this many have been proven innocent since DNA testing was begun, how many innocent people have been killed before DNA testing was available?

The author's concludes that none of the 1,005 death row inmates who have been killed were innocent, and my question is: "How do you know that for sure?" Allen did not establish that DNA testing was available for all 1,005 inmates killed. **My conclusion:** The U.S. is the only western democracy that continues the practice of capital punishment. Misleading articles like this one do not help to justify such a practice.

### **Quotation Ideas from the Article**

**Direct Quotation:** According to Allen (2004) Mr. Coleman's lawyers tried to establish that his execution would constitute "cruel and unusual punishment on two new grounds" (p. 34).

**Paraphrase:** Lawyers for Coleman found two reasons for pleading that his killing would constitute "cruel and unusual punishment" (Allen, 2004, p. 34).

**Direct Quotation:** Allen (2004) claims, ". . . more than 100 people on death row have been exonerated of the crimes for which they were convicted; but none of the 1,005 people who have been executed since **capital punishment** was reinstated in 1976 has been proved conclusively innocent using DNA" (p. 34).

**Paraphrase:** Allen (2004) claims that none of the 1,005 death row inmates killed since 1976 (the reenactment of the death penalty) have been shown innocent through DNA testing.

## Reference

Allen, R.P. (2004). A matter of evidence: Death and the law. *The Economist*, 378 (8461), 34. Retrieved Mar 25, 2006, from Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center database.