

EDITORIAL

Not a fitting punishment

Last week the United States Supreme Court heard the case of Patrick Kennedy, a 43-year-old man from Louisiana who was sentenced to death for brutally raping his 8-year-old stepdaughter in 2003.

At issue is whether the Eighth Amendment, which prohibits cruel and unusual punishment, applies to the death penalty in cases in which a victim's life is not taken.

The 5-4 ruling, which is becoming more common in controversial cases as the court's ideological lines become clearer, declares state and federal authorities can no longer

execute people convicted of child rape.

The judgement invalidated statutes in six states that previously allowed such punishment and commuted the sentences of Kennedy and another convicted child rapist in Louisiana to life in prison.

And they should rot.

But the sheer depravity of the crime appeals to our sense of fear and anger. What constitutional grounds are involved in matters like this become secondary to our basic survival instincts. In a less civilized society, we would do far more than

merely use a needle. But we are civilized.

However, that didn't stop politicians all around the country from bashing the ruling. They can't be blamed though; no one ever lost votes for wanting to execute child rapists. The issue was even enough to bring together Sens. Barack Obama and John McCain, who both disagreed with it.

Considering how few convicts and states this will actually affect, the ruling carries more symbolic weight. But despite the varying opinions on the death penalty, it is

Our Opinion

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comforting to know that this ruling helps it be applied more responsibly.

But statements like that aren't worth a lot of votes. Perhaps next time, lawmakers could've taken their time and adopted a new talking point: The ruling was responsible and allows these despicable people to enter the prison system as child predators, a punishment that will surely fit the heinous crimes they committed, rather than be granted a quick death.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

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Readers' opinions

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'Iron Man': profit and politics

My friends advised me for weeks that I had to see "Iron Man." I resisted, citing the utter lack of quality in the majority of recent movies and recent action movies in particular. They said this one is different; see it and you will understand. On Father's Day, I relented and saw it with my family, subsequently continuing my streak of making incorrect decisions based on preconception.

"Iron Man" is a fascinating movie, not merely from the action-adventure standpoint, but from the sociocultural one. Watching a quality politicized superhero flick makes you realize what people saw in comics back in the day. The stories were mostly allegories of the U.S. vs. U.S.S.R. or capitalism vs. communism themes, though to most people of my generation the stories seem more caked in action and violence than politico-drama. The most recent Marvel movie, though, does a shockingly adequate job of highlighting the paradox of modern capitalism in a globalized world: at what point does profiting from the system become an unpatriotic act?

For those unfamiliar with the movie, Tony Stark is a brilliant engineer who takes over his father's weapons business - and proceeds to make it, and himself, a household name. In designing ever more complex, and effective, weapons, Stark parallels the archetypal American industry: industrial, efficient, and profitable. Innovation is the driver, exemplifying all that young Americans are told to admire. In his free time, Stark is the celebrity superhero that we so often worship in the real world, as much for his money and style as for his ability to attract the fairer sex and social charm.

The problem is Stark's day job is not that of Kobe Bryant or Brad Pitt. To support his extravagant manner of living, Stark designs the devices that (in the movie) the U.S. mil-



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itary uses in war engagements. Certainly, no self-respecting American would ask the valiant soldiers to enter combat unprepared, but there is a difference between enforcing political policy as war and enabling war to be a massively political tool. The former is clearly patriotism while the latter is debatably so.

It is in this netherworld that the politicization becomes apparent. During the course of the movie, Stark realizes the dilemma of producing such industrially efficient death machines and adjusts his life accordingly. He does this in two ways: the first is by changing the way his company operates, while the second is by literally becoming a superhero.

Without becoming a cinematic love-fest, Iron Man proceeds to argue that industry has a greater purpose than pure profit - the subtle political message of the action movie. In modern America, we extol the virtues of corporations that generate high profit (and therefore high stock growth) yet revile those values in corporations of the military-industrial complex like Halliburton. We ask our companies to make money for us yet sometimes we critique this philosophy, failing to grasp the inherent paradox of capitalism.

To be continued next week ... Happy Independence Day Chambana!

Lee is a recent graduate who wonders how a movie could so glorify an "engineer" who is not he.