

Edited by Fainos Mangena, Jonathan O. Chimakonam

The Death Penalty from an African Perspective

Views from Zimbabwean and Nigerian Philosophers

SERIES IN PHILOSOPHY

About the editor

Fainos Mangena Ph.D, is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe. His areas of research interest include Environmental Ethics, African jurisprudence, Ethics and Culture, Gender and Politics.

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“This book attempts to philosophically interrogate the socio-anthropological dimensions of the practice of death penalty in sub-Saharan Africa. Its originality lies on its resolve to forge a consensual anti-death penalty theory from a multicultural African perspective. In this way, the submissions in the book, together promise to be an invaluable contribution to narratives about capital punishment in traditional African cultures and in political settings of contemporary Africa.

Owing to its possible appeal to ethnologists, moral philosophers, jurists, scholars in religious studies and African Studies, the book is likely to cause a revision of widely held positions on death penalty and raise controversy over the veracity of the claims of these burgeoning scholars. This is because many of the views presented seemed to have been based on sentimental assumptions about high premium for life and regard for human dignity ascribed to selected African folklores, mores, and proverbs contained in African literature and orature. Beside mechanics and style of writing, editorial needs for the future would include an evaluation of the moral status of human sacrifice and other cultural practices vis a vis the doctrine of human dignity which such principles as hunhu-ubuntu/umunna/ndu are purported to portray. Contemplating an African position on death penalty is an ambitious project that would stir debate. But if profitably sustained, it may enable further expansion of the scope and breadth of the study for a homogenous cultural meeting point.”

Muyiwa Falaiye, Ph.D,

MNAL, Professor of Philosophy, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Director, Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos, Nigeria

Summary

This book is about an African philosophical examination of the death penalty debate. In a 21st century world where the notion of human right is primed, this book considers the question of the death penalty in two sub-Saharan African countries namely, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, notorious for their poor human right records. This edited collection comprises of 11 essays from Zimbabwean and Nigerian philosophers. As opinions continue to divide over the retention or abolition of the death penalty, these African philosophers attempt to localise this debate by raising the following questions: What is the meaning of life in the African place? Is it proper to take the human life under any guise at all? Who has the right to take the human life? Can the death penalty be justified on the bases of African cultures? Why should it be abolished? Why should it be retained? Indeed, this book is the first of its kind to engage the tumultuous issue of capital punishment in the postcolonial Africa and from the African philosophical point of view.

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 VERNON PRESS
VERNON SERIES IN PHILOSOPHY

January 2018 | Hardback 236x160mm | 252 Pages | ISBN: 978-1-62273-262-3
Also in Paperback (\$53/€45/£40) | ISBN: 978-1-62273-479-5

SUBJECTS Philosophy, Law, Contemporary Social Issues

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