teen ink

By teens, for teens

Sep/Oct 2024

Follow us on Social Media

PLUS, a special segment on STEM!

Spooky Fiction

Sharing some of your most chilling tales!

THE INTRUDER

ARTICLE BY SAVANNAH LETS, HOLLY SPRINGS, NC

ARTWORK BY SHIQI BIAN, SHANGHAI CITY, CHINA

I wake up to a crash coming from the depths of the living room. I shake my husband awake. He's resistant to even opening his eyes. I shake him with more force this time but to no avail. When I speak, the alertness in my voice convinces him to go check. He sits up on his side of the bed, sighing his annoyed sigh. He reaches for the bat he keeps under our bed and walks out of the bedroom.

I lay awake in bed now. I dart my eyes around the room, and my breathing becomes heavier, but I attempt to cease it. My anxious mind starts to flood with all the possibilities of what might await in our living room. My heart is pounding in my chest, and my mind is racing. I am stuck, paralyzed, unable to move anything except my darting eyes, which carefully watch the door, then, swiftly look to the wall beside me, a window, maybe one to jump out of. I can't hear what's going on outside the door; if anything, the ringing in my ears drowns out any sound that could be coming from the living room. Suddenly, I hear raucous footsteps coming towards the bedroom. Soon, followed by the slow creaking of the door.

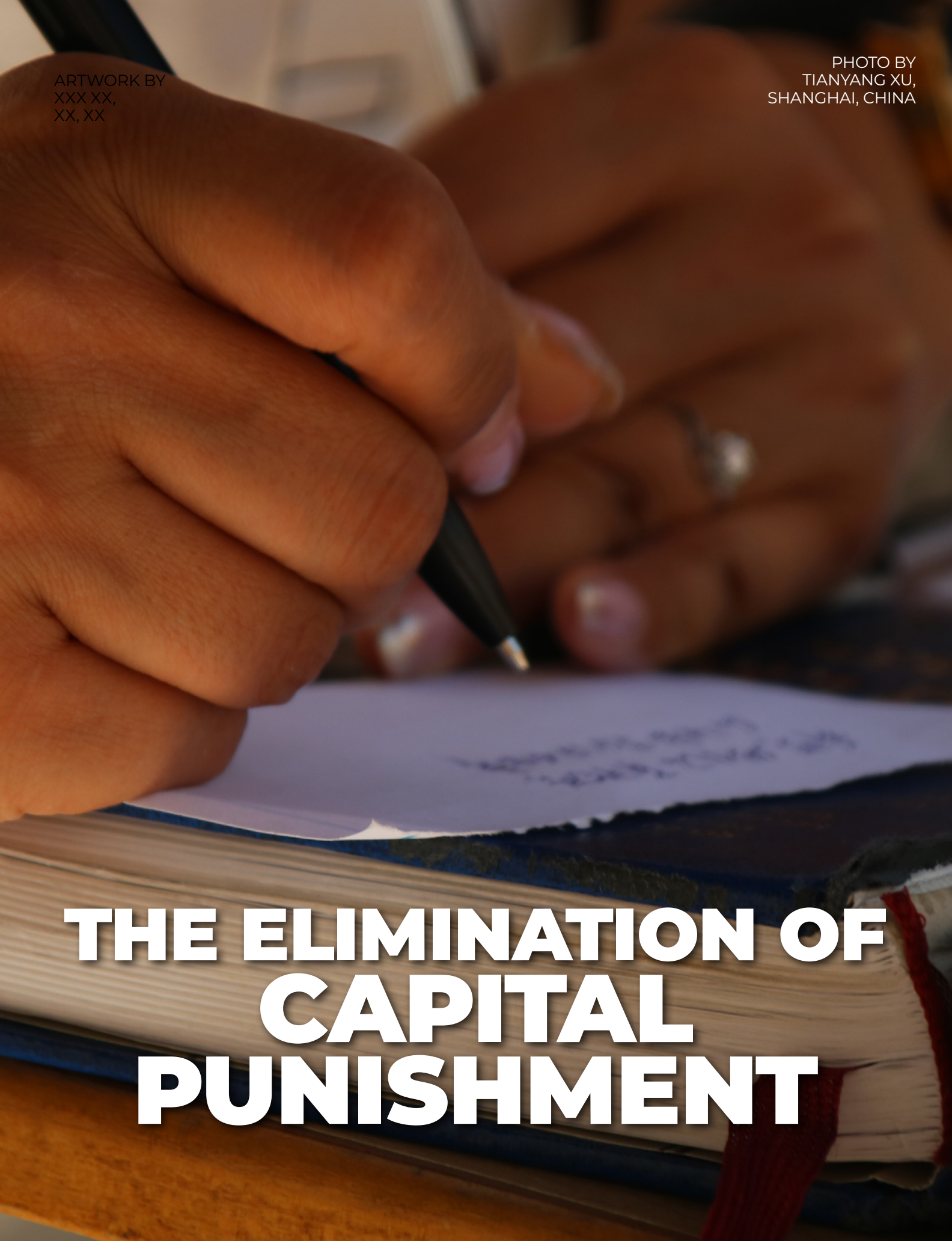
"It's gone now."

His voice was raspier than usual as he spoke. I nodded and laid back down. I pulled the comforter around my quivering body. I was unsure if it was from the cold or the fear I had just succumbed to. He got in bed with me too, laying down and taking what little of the comforter I had left for him. He wrapped his arms around me and pulled me closer to him. His presence is comforting but doesn't fully ease the unruliness within me. My body has gone limp now, but my mind is far from tranquil. I know I'm safe now, or at least, I think I am, I should be. That's what my husband would never do: reassure me everything was going to be alright. I peeked my head towards the digital clock on the nightstand, seeing the time read "3:47." I sighed in frustration, knowing I'd have to get up for work soon within the next three hours; I really didn't need to lose any more sleep. As I try to drift back into sleep, I feel his hands reach for my hair. He runs his lengthy finger through several strands in an attempt to soothe me. I do feel safe knowing he's beside me, but something still isn't right. The bedroom is so dark, the blackout curtains not allowing even the slightest amount of light to peer through. What if the intruder was still there, lurking in the shadows? Was he really sure it was gone?

"I know you're awake, Honey."

He whispers in my ear, causing my eyes to open once again. He knows me well enough to know I can't possibly be sleeping. I know he can sense my fear; he's always had a sixth sense for these kinds of things. I don't turn to face him; I stay where I am.

"You killed him, right?" And without hesitation, the creature replies, "Of course." ◆



ARTWORK BY
XXX XX,
XX, XX

PHOTO BY
TIANYANG XU,
SHANGHAI, CHINA

THE ELIMINATION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

ARTICLE BY JON CEKODHIMA, TIRANA, ALBANIA

The argument revolving around capital punishment is one that people have been debating over for many years. While the fundamental concept of justice may resonate universally, opinions diverge widely on the appropriate balance and severity of its consequences. Self-evidently, the death penalty poses many dilemmas, often being regarded as a violation of basic human rights. This fact leads many to ask: does the death penalty truly serve its purpose? Most argue that its continued existence goes against the very values that our judicial system is supposed to protect. Thus, it's time to give the death penalty some serious thought in order to move toward a society that is fairer and more just.

One of the main reasons why so many countries in the world have banned the death penalty is due to the extreme amount of money needed to carry out such a punishment. In fact, the money

IT'S TIME TO GIVE THE DEATH PENALTY SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT

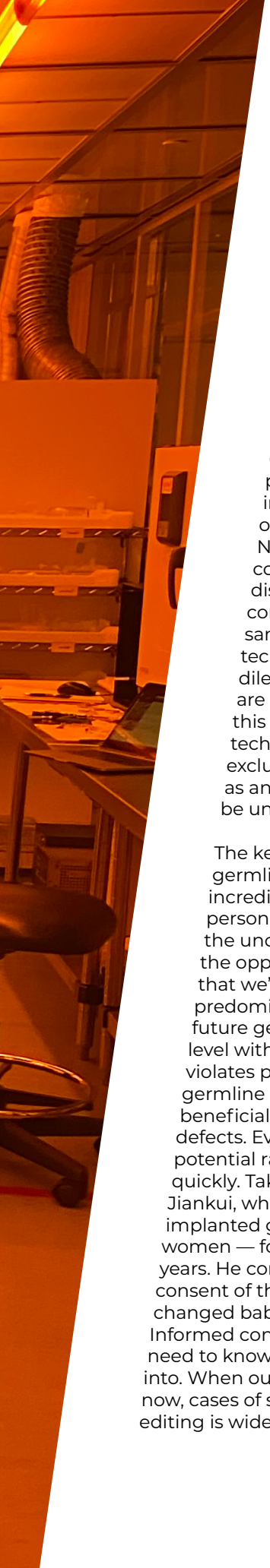
needed for capital punishment is way less than all the expenses of a system utilizing life without parole. Longer trials, many appeals, and the relative frequency of executions are the reasons behind this expense. Most cases in which criminal punishment is sought don't end up with the culprit being executed. Even when the death penalty is imposed, very often, it is then overturned in the courts. The usual conclusion of the process includes the criminal getting a life sentence, but with a higher cost, due to the death penalty procedure that led up to that point. This suggests the death penalty is an extremely expensive and inefficient process in terms of both money and time.

Unfortunately, there have been many cases in which an innocent person was blamed for a crime and had to suffer from the consequences of another person unjustly. In some cases, this consequence has been the death penalty. This sad reality shows a deep inequity in the country's legal system. The idea of an innocent person experiencing the worst possible form of punishment incites anger and sorrow in many. The accounts of those unlucky enough to be innocently convicted reflect the flaws in the use of the death penalty. A very recent occurrence of this happened to a man named Nathaniel Woods. On March 5th, 2020, Nathaniel Woods was executed after being wrongfully accused of the killing of three Birmingham officers. He was unarmed at the time and was incorrectly convicted for purposefully luring the officers to their deaths. This is one of the many cases in which a person had to lose their life due to the flaws of the judicial system. If the death penalty wasn't carried out, the man would eventually be found not guilty and would be excused from his sentence. But that cannot happen if the suspect has been executed, proving to be yet another flaw in using capital punishment.

One may argue that capital punishment is fair and a form of justice for the family of a loved one who has been murdered. While capital punishment may be satisfactory for the victim's loved ones, it has been proven not to be a good deterrent to crime in its entirety. By implementing a moratorium, which is a temporary suspension of a law, a synthetic control assessment revealed no evidence of a deterrent impact related to death penalty statutes. The homicide rates did not significantly decrease as a result of the moratoriums, therefore showing that the death penalty did not have a significant effect on crime. Although the study takes into account only four states, the results are important to take into consideration for future policymakers, as they show the ineffectiveness of the death penalty.

In conclusion, the death penalty is an extremely inefficient form of punishment. The process that leads up to the execution is highly likely to fail, leading to an extreme waste of effort and resources. Additionally, the length of the procedure and the number of permits needed contribute to the high cost. The process is also very risky. Although it happens very rarely, there is a chance that the suspect is, in truth, an innocent person, causing harm to the state and the family of the civilian and potentially sparking protests. There is also no evidence revealing that the death penalty deters crime. This means that states that use capital punishment harm the lives of innocent and spend great amounts of money for little to no effect on crime in its entirety. ◆

THE EFFECTS & RAMIFICATIONS OF GENE EDITING



ARTICLE BY ANONYMOUS

PHOTO BY JONATHAN LEE, SUNNYVALE, CA

Today, we stand on the verge of a completely new medical and biological era. With the advent of novel gene editing technologies like CRISPR-Cas9, our future now holds possibilities previously only possible in science fiction. These technologies offer so much potential — as put by Nature; they can do everything from completely eradicating bacterial diseases to treating the most complicated genetic afflictions. At the same time, our usage of such technology raises profound ethical dilemmas and questions about how we are impacting future generations with this technology. I believe gene-editing technologies should be used to exclusively affect the current generation, as any changes to future generations may be unwanted and unnecessary.

The key distinction is in somatic and germline gene editing. The former is incredible in its ability to administer personalized treatments to people and cure the uncurable. The latter, however, is quite the opposite — it raises ethical dilemmas that we've grappled with for years, predominantly that of consent. Altering future generations at such a fundamental level without their approval completely violates personal liberties and rights. Such germline editing may start for initially beneficial reasons, such as curing genetic defects. Even still, this is problematic in its potential ramifications and can turn malicious quickly. Take, for instance, the case of He Jiankui, who, with deception and forgery, implanted genetically edited embryos into women — for his actions, he was jailed for three years. He completely forewent the informed consent of the women and fundamentally changed babies that otherwise had no defects. Informed consent is so important because people need to know what they are getting themselves into. When our ethical framework is as weak as it is now, cases of such misuse will abound if germline editing is widely allowed.

More than just misuse, though, the technology is simply not ready to be used safely, especially on a germline scale. An article by the National Institute of Health shows that such gene editing technology is far too unsafe to be consistently used for germline editing. Any unintended editing can lead to cancer and, if not done properly, can lead to "genetic mosaicism," where only some cells see genetic alterations take hold. The article further illustrates the dangers of such changes — and, coupled with a lack of consent from the people to whom the changes are being made, it really is a complete ethical catastrophe. In addition to such ethical dilemmas, it can have ramifications for the human population as a whole in the future. Often, the goal of such gene editing is to remove disease-causing alleles. However, this may be secretly harmful to our population by reducing genetic diversity. According to the reputed PNAS, about a tenth of people in Africa are heterozygotic for sickle-cell anemia because it protects them from parasite-induced malaria from the mosquitoes surrounding them. If we blindly allow germline genetic editing with no regulation, we may remove all such disease-linked alleles, which could lead to a decline in evolutionary fitness in the long run by decreasing our diversity and adaptability.

CRISPR and other gene-editing technologies will inevitably develop in the future. The best thing we can do to prevent such harmful uses of the technology, though, is to establish strong, global regulatory frameworks. Far-reaching international organizations like the UN or the WHO should dedicate a sector to regulating the technologies. More specifically, such germline editing should be completely banned until a scientific and moral consensus can be reached on whether or not the technology should be used. We also need to establish ethics committees to rigorously oversee all experimentation done with these technologies, as is common for all disciplines. The path forward is admittedly convoluted, but there is a future where gene editing is ultimately used for good. We just need to work to create that future. ◆

ARTWORK BY
EUNSEO KIM, SEOUL,
SOUTH KOREA

Follow us on Social Media