

# The Washington Post

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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7-28-89

### *What About Sympathy for the Victim?*

I was very distraught and a bit confused as to why The Post devoted 20 column inches of its op-ed page to "The Execution of Ronnie Dunkins" [July 22].

It's regrettable the writer of the column, Dale Aukerman, lost an "irreplaceable" friend in the person of Ronnie Dunkins when Mr. Dunkins recently was executed for murder in Alabama. I wonder if Mr. Aukerman feels any regret that four young children lost their mother when Mr. Dunkins and a friend stabbed her to death.

As a result of that crime, the victim, Lynn McCurry, becomes another statistic, nothing more than a photo on the walls and a memory in the hearts of those she left behind. The perpetrator, meanwhile, becomes the subject of a sympathetic op-ed article in the widely

read and respected Post. Judging from the content and tone of the article, one wonders who the victim was in the case. Thank goodness we have The Post to provide some illumination.

So Mr. Dunkins was represented in his defense, possibly inadequately, by a "scared young lawyer" appointed by the court. I wonder if Mr. Dunkins' attorney was half as scared as his victim was as she was being stabbed 66 times. Perhaps fear is all relative.

The emphasis on criminals' rights and concerns over those of their victims is a disturbing perversion of right and wrong. Crime and punishment are sometimes issues clouded by shades of gray, and the Dunkins case may be an example. Yet there can be little doubt

that in this case, the punishment certainly fit the crime. Our sympathies properly lie with the victim of this crime, not her killers. Unfortunately, the column failed to make that distinction.

Any society that places a higher premium upon and devotes more attention to the life and death of its criminals rather than its victims is a society in grave jeopardy of completely losing its moral compass. Any media outlet demonstrating similar priorities, as The Post apparently has, is not only lost, it is deserving of contempt.

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