

**SPARING GARY RIDGWAY: THE DEMISE OF THE
DEATH PENALTY IN WASHINGTON STATE?**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The death penalty has long occupied a controversial role in the American criminal justice system. While widely decried as a violation of human rights by many western nations, the United States has steadfastly clung to capital punishment as a viable method of punishment and deterrence.¹ All controversy aside, the Gary Ridgway case in Washington appeared to be one instance where the death penalty represented a fitting retribution for past crimes. The infamous “Green River Killer,” Ridgway murdered at least forty-nine women before finally being brought to justice in November 2001.² Yet to the sur-

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1. John Quigley, *International Attention to the Death Penalty: Texas as a Lighting Rod*, 8 TEX. F. ON C.L. & C.R. 175, 176 (2003). The United States Supreme Court has long protected the death penalty as a valid use of the states’ police power, despite arguments that such a punishment violates the Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. See also Barry Latzer, *The Failure of Comparative Proportionality Review of Capital Cases (With Lessons From New Jersey)*, 64 ALB. L. REV. 1161, 1171 (2001). However, in Eu2 36g510s44 20401oo61toetihe

proportionality review legislative scheme. Finally, Part VI provides a brief conclusion.