I am Troy Davis, part II

Reading: I am Troy Davis, pp. 160-271

September 24, 2014
Catching up

• Questions about *Picking Cotton*, Jennifer?

• Quizzes
  – More 10-question quizzes coming, be prepared
  – Credit for one question in last quiz to all students
  – Pol Sci is not supposed to be easier than Chemistry: study this stuff, learn it
  – You will be surprised how much some factual knowledge can come in handy when talking to people, including professors and employers
  – Quizzes will continue to be factual; papers will be more interpretive
Speakers tonight

• Jen Marlowe and Kim Davis
• 5:30 in Hamilton 100 (note room change)
• 5:00 get there early to get your book autographed if you want
• They will also sell t-shirts and books, with the proceeds to a scholarship fund for De’Jaun, who is a sophomore in college at Morehouse
• TA’s will have sign-in sheets, make sure you sign in
I Am Troy Davis

• Is it / should it be constitutional to:
  – Keep someone in prison for 22 years before executing them?
  – Sentence someone to death, then see that 65 percent of the death sentences are overturned? Oops, just kidding. (Not in Troy’s case, however.)
  – Repeatedly set execution dates, then cancel them? (Troy had 4 dates, only the $4^{th}$ one held.)

• Do such things amount to torture?
Actually, 22 years is about average
Public Defenders Offices

• Troy was represented by the Georgia Resource Center
  – Their budget cut by US Congress in 1995 (peak of death penalty use in the US) by 70 percent

• Difficulty in gaining political support to fund indigent defense services / public defenders offices: why spend taxpayer dollars to defend admitted and convicted murderers? Hard to swallow politically, with predictable results
Pro-Bono Attorneys

• Troy, Henry McCollum both represented by a combination of “white-shoe” law firms volunteering their time, and full-time (but often overworked) capital defenders.

• NC system a model of reform, but highly unusual; GA more typical in a poorly funded system

• How little funding should be too little? You are entitled to an attorney. A good one? One with time to spend on your case? Different questions.
Officer down, but who shot him?

• No one wants the crime to be unsolved...
• Huge pressure to “close the case”
• But quite the chaotic scene and hard to reconstruct exactly what did happen that night in the Burger King parking lot

• Danger of wrongful conviction higher when sympathy with the victim is greatest?
  – Officers, children, other sympathetic victims...
Jury composition

• Question came about the racial composition of the jury. My internet search showed:

  – 8 of 9 preemptory strikes by the DA were directed at Blacks

  – Still, the final jury consisted of 7 Blacks and 5 Whites
“Otherness”

• In death cases, we often see a great effort to make the inmate seem like an animal, someone so “beyond the pale” that you should have no sympathy for them.

• Pre-trial release of information, inflammatory media coverage, “perp-walks” carefully orchestrated.

• #iftheygunnedmedown: there are lots of ways to pick a photo
Humanizing

• Troy’s family in this book attempts obviously to present him in a different light than the prosecution would.

• How frustrating these disputes are
  – Officer McPhail’s family and others think Troy is a killer
  – Troy’s family feels he has been unjustly convicted
Attention to Victim or to Inmate?

• Increased attention to inmates after they are convicted generally serves to “humanize” them.

• But in order to be sentenced to death they often go through a process of being “dehumanized” or “demonized”

• Focus on victim and nature of crime, then quickly turn to the accused and say: someone must pay. Henry McCollum was such a case.
Why a Media Storm? Why Troy Davis?

• Is his case worse than others?
• Was it about timing?
• Was it his family’s efforts to generate publicity?
• Was it Amnesty International seeking cases? If so, why did they pick this one in particular?
• Was it how the case represents outsider’s fears about “rough justice” in the US South?
• Was it just random?
• Did the media coverage make a difference?