

# William J. Brennan

## Quotes

*Law, Government, Punishment, Rights, Religious, Justice, Mean, Sex, Ideas,  
People, Freedom, Principles, Way, Views, Temptation, School, Liberty, Political,  
Flags, Judging*

Death is not only an unusually severe punishment, unusual in its pain, in its finality and in its enormity, but it serves no penal purpose more effectively than a less severe punishment.

~William J. Brennan

We do not consecrate the flag by punishing its desecration, for in doing so, we dilute the freedom this cherished emblem represents.

~William J. Brennan

If the right to privacy means anything, it is the right of the individual, married or single, to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion.

~William J. Brennan

Sex and obscenity are not synonymous. Obscene material is material which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interest.

~William J. Brennan

We must meet the challenge rather than wish it were not before us.

~William J. Brennan

Religious conflict can be the bloodiest and cruelest conflicts that turn people into fanatics.

~William J. Brennan

Perhaps the bleakest fact of all is that the death penalty is imposed not only in a freakish and discriminatory manner, but also in some cases upon defendants who are actually innocent.

~William J. Brennan

We cannot let colorblindness become myopia which masks the reality that many "created equal" have been treated within our lifetimes as inferior both by the law and by their fellow citizens.

~William J. Brennan

After each perceived security crisis ended, the United States has remorsefully realized that the abrogation of civil liberties was unnecessary.

~William J. Brennan

Use of a mentally ill person's involuntary confession is antithetical to the notion of fundamental fairness embodied in the due process clause.

~William J. Brennan

The quest for freedom, dignity, and the rights of man will never end.

~William J. Brennan

The framers knew that liberty is a fragile thing, and so should we.

~William J. Brennan

Law cannot stand aside from the social changes around it.

~William J. Brennan

You in the media ought to be ashamed of yourselves to call the provisions and the guarantees of the Bill of Rights 'Technicalities'. They're not. We are what we are because of those guarantees.

~William J. Brennan

Punishing desecration of the flag dilutes the very freedom that makes this emblem so revered.

~William J. Brennan

Sex, a great and mysterious motive force in human life, has indisputably been a subject of absorbing interest to mankind through the ages.

~William J. Brennan

If we are to be as a shining city upon a hill, it will be because of our ceaseless pursuit of the constitutional ideal of human dignity.

~William J. Brennan

No longer is the female destined solely for the home and the rearing of the family and only the male for the marketplace and the world of ideas.

~William J. Brennan

The law is not an end in itself, nor does it provide ends. It is preeminently a means to serve what we think is right.

~William J. Brennan

There is no such thing as a false idea.

~William J. Brennan

If a policeman must know the Constitution, then why not a planner?

~William J. Brennan

The principle inherent in the clause that prohibits pointless infliction of excessive punishment when less severe punishment can adequately achieve the same purposes invalidates the punishment.

~William J. Brennan

Appellant constituted a legitimate class of one, and this provides a basis for Congress's decision to proceed with dispatch with respect to his materials.

~William J. Brennan

Debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust and wide-open and that...may well include vehement, caustic, and sometimes unpleasantly sharp attacks on government and public officials.

~William J. Brennan

Congress acknowledged that society's accumulated myths and fears about disability and disease are as handicapping as are the physical

limitations that flow from actual impairment.

~William J. Brennan

We current justices read the Constitution in the only way that we can:  
as 20th-century Americans.

~William J. Brennan

We look to the history of the time of framing and to the intervening  
history of interpretation. But the ultimate question must be, what do the  
words of the text mean in our time.

~William J. Brennan

We hold that the Constitution does not forbid the states minor intrusions  
into an individual's body under stringently limited conditions.

~William J. Brennan

The Bill of Rights never gets off the page and into the lives of most  
Americans.

~William J. Brennan

Capital punishment...treats members of the human race...as objects to  
be toyed with and discarded.

~William J. Brennan

Clerks get into the damnedest wrangles--which is the way they help  
me.

~William J. Brennan

Whether to the average person, applying contemporary community  
standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole  
appeals to prurient interest.

~William J. Brennan

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