

*Still wringing your hands about America's massive crime problem? Have I got a crime bill for you! Liberals, who are fond of citing Thomas Jefferson to justify their desire to keep God out of the classroom do not, I'll guarantee you, want you to quote **this** Jefferson. I herewith present excerpts from Jefferson's "Bill for Proportioning Crimes and Punishments":*

SECTION I. Whereas it frequently happens that wicked and dissolute men, resigning themselves to the dominion of inordinate passions, commit violations on the lives, liberties, and property of others — the secure enjoyment of these having principally induced men to enter into society — government would be defective in its principal purpose, were it not to restrain such criminal acts by inflicting due punishments on those who perpetrate them ... If the punishment were only proportioned to the injury, men would feel it their inclination, as well as their duty, to see the laws observed ... so that men while contemplating to perpetrate a crime would see their punishment ensuing as necessarily as effects follow their causes. *(Note: According to Jefferson, there are wicked people. Who need to be restrained from their natural activity. By punishment. From the government. Which is its principal purpose. Folks, this is beyond the pale.)*

SECTION IV: If ... a husband murder his wife, a parent his child, or a child his parent, he shall suffer death, by hanging, and his body delivered to Anatomists to be dissected. *(Jefferson was, after all, a man who understood the value of medical research.)*

SECTION V: Whosoever committeth murder by poisoning, shall suffer death by poison. *(There's a certain symmetry and logic to Jeffersonian justice, is there not?)*

SECTION VI: Whosoever committeth murder by way of duel, shall suffer death by hanging; and if he were the challenger, his body, after death, shall be gibbeted [that is, displayed in public]. He who removeth it from the gibbet shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and the officer shall see that it be replaced. *(This law could do wonders for modern-day duels: i.e., gang shootings.)*

SECTION VII: Whosoever shall commit murder in any other way shall suffer death by hanging. *(Hmm — one strike and you're dead.)*

SECTION VIII: And in all cases of ... murder, one half of the lands and goods of the offender shall be forfeited to the next of kin to the person killed, and the other half descend and go to his own representatives. *(A brilliantly efficient restitution plan.)*

SECTION X: Whosoever shall be guilty of manslaughter, shall, for the first offence, be condemned to hard labour for seven years in the public works; shall forfeit one half of his lands and goods to the

next of kin of the person slain; the other half to be sequestered during such term, in the hands, and to the use, of the commonwealth, allowing a reasonable part of the profits for the support of his family. The second offence shall be deemed murder. *(For murder, see VII.)*

SECTION XIII: Whenever sentence of death shall have been pronounced against any person for treason or murder, execution thereof shall be done on the next day but one, after such sentence, unless it be Sunday, and then on the Monday following. *(A slam dunk! In Jeffersonian justice, there's no loitering on death row.)*

SECTION XIV: Whosoever shall be guilty of rape, or sodomy with man or woman, shall be punished; if a man, by castration, a woman, by boring through the cartilage of her nose a hole of one half inch in diameter at the least. *(Jefferson might have to update his punishment for women; this sounds like a fashion statement of the nineties.)*

SECTION XV: Whosoever on purpose shall disfigure another, by cutting out or disabling the tongue, slitting or cutting off a nose, lip, or ear, branding, or otherwise, shall be maimed, or disfigured in like sort, and moreover, shall forfeit one half of his lands and goods to the sufferer.

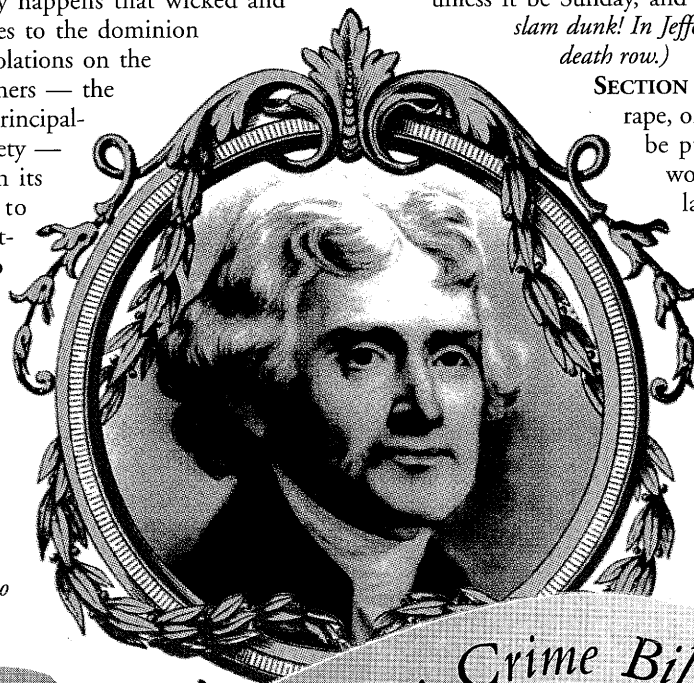
(In other words, "an eye for an eye" — an approach that worked throughout human history. Until 20th-century America.)

SECTION XX: Whosoever committeth a robbery, shall be condemned to hard labour four years in the public works, and shall make double reparation to the persons injured. *(In some cities — such as New York City — the cops don't even take a report if you've been robbed. But seems to me the threat of four years in New York's public works would deter any would-be robber.)*

SECTION XXII: Whatsoever act, if committed in the night time, shall constitute the crime of burglary, shall, if committed in the day, be deemed house-breaking; and whoever is guilty thereof, shall be condemned to hard labour three years in the public works, and shall make reparation to the persons injured. *(There goes L.A.'s night life.)*

Section XXIV: Grand larceny shall be where the goods stolen are of the value of five dollars; and whosoever shall be guilty thereof, shall be forthwith put in the pillory for one half hour, shall be condemned to hard labour two years in the public works, and shall make reparation to the persons injured. *(A fascinating image of Webb Hubbell in the public stocks springs to mind.)*

Historical Note: Jefferson wrote a revision of the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia while he was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates. His "Revisal of the Laws: Drafts of Legislation" covered religious freedom, as well as crime and punishment. After he was elected Governor of Virginia in 1779, he submitted these to the Assembly. Though they were never enacted, James Madison called the Revisal of the Laws "a mine of legislative wealth." And so they are.



The Thomas Jefferson Crime Bill