

On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



VOL. 18 ISSUE 3
JULY-SEPT. 2014

The Moment

You have heard us say that we consider ourselves to be family. And so it will not surprise you to learn that we talk to each other, I mean really talk about a whole lot more than just the death penalty. In a recent such conversation with a man who calls me Mom, I told him that I was thinking that my next article should be about the importance of holding the moment in one's hand. He liked the idea and together we explored it a little, which is why I dedicate this article to him and to all his brothers who are doing just that.

One might think that it is obvious that one must hold the moment in one's hand as not only will it never return, but because nobody has more than just this particular moment. But the question is, are we being faithful to it by holding it gently, experiencing it fully, living it consciously and gratefully? You are of course correct when you say that there are many moments in your life when you are busy with very important matters and don't have time for that kind of thing. Perhaps, but also perhaps not because even when we are doing these very important things, like for example writing this article, being aware that this moment is precious and that I must be faithful to it does not distract from the task. Try it and I think you will find that it makes even your important tasks more pleasurable.

What if the situation demands all of your attention? Could you perhaps at least try holding the moment in your hand a few times a day? If you do, you will be surprised!

But what of those moments when we are overwhelmed by grief, by loss, by pain? Surely we don't think that those moments should be held in one's hand? Most probably we all have to figure out for ourselves how we handle those moments, and there is certainly no glib answer. Speaking from my own experience, those moments deserve stillness and gentleness. It seems to help that one held the good moments in one's hand and knows that nothing is lost in time and space, that there is forever, including and especially the moments we held in our hands.

And now back to the beginning and to my dedication! Many years ago a Benedictine monk spoke to me about the courage to be happy. Seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? But of course it is not. It does take courage to be faithful to the moment, to hold it in our hands and to say what I have right now is good and enough and makes me happy. If that kind of courage can be found on death row is there any reason for any of us not to be as courageous? All we have to do is to live our moments fully and gratefully. We know you can do it.

Esther Brown

**PROJECT HOPE TO ABOLISH
THE DEATH PENALTY** (phadp)
501 (C) (3) non- profit.

MISSION STATEMENT:

Working together with
friends, supporters and
other advocates to educate
the public and bring about
the abolition of Capital
Punishment in Alabama.

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Project Hope to Abolish the Death
Penalty in Alabama

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**THIS NEWSLETTER WAS WRITTEN,
TYPED AND FORMATTED ON DEATH
ROW AT HOLMAN PRISON**

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

It's bright, it's sunny, it's hot!
I'm here and Jeff is not! hee hee...
That's right ladies n gents it's Carey
G. here to dish the scoop. We have good,
bad and in between. Been a busy few months
so let's get to it.

As many of you know, the execution
in Arizona did not go well (also the
Oklahoma and Ohio executions were botched)
Hopefully, the suffering these men went
through will open the eyes of those so
intent on this practice. Some of you
may not know that we recently had 2 deaths
at Holman also; Ricky "KIDD" Adkins died
from medical complications on July 1st.
and Justin Hosch committed suicide on
the 25th of August. Our thoughts are
with both of their families.

We would like to give a shout out
to Senator McCain (Rep. AZ) for his take
on the AZ execution. Good lookin out
big dawg. Not every day they speak the
truth, you know?

California's death penalty got ruled
unconstitutional in July by a federal
judge. The State is appealing, of course,
but it's definitely a step in the right
direction for the Nation.

On another note, phadp received our
first donation from "AMAZON SMILE".
Remember to check phadp when shopping
on AMAZON. The new SMILE application
is a great way to donate without
actually having to give a donation! (see
explanation in AL NEWS). Thank you, to
those who have already used it.

We also received a \$2,000. grant from
RESIST thanks to our Executive Director.
Thank you mom for all the hard work.
We love you.

Despite the recent tragedies and the
lives lost without reason, it's an
exciting time for death penalty opponents.
The curtain is falling and history is
holding its breath. Change is in the
air, we should all take a moment to
remember the good in our lives. Sit back,
take a breath and be happy for a few
seconds. It's well worth the effort.

(cont. on page 3)

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(cont. on page 3)

(conclusion of editorial)

Finally, we of the board of directors have had several birthdays in the last few months, mine included. Thank you, to all who wished us well. And happy birthday to those who had them.

Til next time, be good and enjoy life.

Carey Grayson
Z-598 H-11
Ex. Coor/Asst. Ed.

Abolishing the death penalty is an issue conservatives can support. It falls right in line with their core values of fiscal responsibility, crime deterrence, a smaller government, and a pro-life stance. This is why capital punishment is bad public policy and should be abolished.

For politicians, fiscal responsibility means being prudent when spending the public's money. Republicans often use the term to suggest that they won't increase federal or state debt. Since reported analysis has shown that the cost for a capital case far exceeds that of a case where life without parole is the punishment, it would make sense for a fiscal conservative to want to abolish the death penalty.

Being tough on crime is another part of the conservative platform. What you may not realize is that having the death penalty doesn't deter crime. Crime statistics have shown that the opposite is, in fact, true. States with capital punishment actually have higher rates of violent crime. Having the death penalty prevents any chance of swift and sure justice, keeping victim's families from ever having closure.

Conservatives are not surprised when the government proves unsuccessful in regulating industry, commerce and health care. In fact, they often say "I told you so" after failed attempts, so they should be on board in dismantling the death penalty. Something as important and irreversible as taking a person's life should not be trusted to the same people who run the D.M.V. As an example, Texas has the most executions year after year, so it isn't surprising cases continue to arise where Texas executed an innocent man. Troubling, but not surprising. There is nothing conservative about that.

Pro-life politicians think it's wrong for the government to be involved in any way with taking a life. Conservatives are out protesting against drone strikes against American citizens. Well, since the death penalty is just another way of giving states the authority to kill American citizens, it sure seems like a no-brainer for conservatives to want to abolish the death penalty.

Bart Johnson
Z-778 F-18

Can we have a moment of silence? Shhhhh-----as we pray for a moment of peace. I give a shout out to all of the riders, who are standing and protesting in the streets.

Why are our local community leaders quiet?
While young and innocent lives are being lost in the streets?

Why do I hear my cousin cryin? While the blood of her son stains the carpets of the house where he used to sleep.

Why are children being neglected? While Bills are being passed that makes it hard for their parents to provide food to eat?

California, Florida, Ohio, Missouri, New York, Arkansas and elsewhere.....I see ya, I feel ya, and I protest with ya in spirit...continue to ride for the justice that the innocent young black-men deserve, who were slain/ struck down by officers who are paid by the community to protect these very same individuals.

As long as we stand up and make noise and demand our gaurantees , change will come, don't lay down...PEACE

Randy Lewis
Z-741 I-6

sweat'n in a box
twenty three hours ev'ry day
wait'n on word from the courts
hope'n and pray'n i get some play
haven't heard from my lawyer
sweat'n in a box
twenty three hours ev'ry day
watch'n and wait'n for the mail
pray'n and cuss'n i don't fail
all of these years,
been treated like some mangy cur
sweat'n in a box
twenty three hours ev'ry day
pen-friends come and go
friends in agony die very slow
family, friends , and memories fade
sweat'n in a box
twenty three hours ev'ry day

VAN / I-26

ALABAMA NEWS
2014 3rd Qtr.

* All of the conflict concerning the recent botched executions, drugs, protocols and secrecy laws is still widespread and ongoing throughout the United States.

* Esther had a Board of Directors conference-call with Journey of Hope.

* A new poll published in the Washington Post held that 52% were for life without parole and 42% were for death.

* Esther attended the July 15th "YOUTH RALLY" on the Capitol steps, held by the 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement.

* We have a cool new feature with Amazon.com called "AMAZONSMILE" Any time you go to Amazon.com you can select Project Hope to receive 5% of the purchase cost, at NO COST TO YOU. We ask those of you who use Amazon to please check out AMAZONSMILE and click on PHADP to participate.

* Ricky "KIDD" Adkins died from medical problems on July 1st.


* PHADP is proud and grateful to have received a \$2,000 grant from RESIST.

* Esther did a radio interview on WVNN (Huntsville) cumulus radio, in counterpoint to Senator Holtzclaw's pro-secrecy law Bill & electric chair plan.

* Justin Hosch committed suicide in his cell on 8-25-2014.

* William Zigler has gone back for a new trial (Mobile).

* Esther had a conference call with the Alabama conference of the NAACP and representatives of the National leadership of the NAACP.



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Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty is an Interfaith 501 C 3 organization whose mission is to educate and mobilize communities to act to abolish the death penalty in Alabama. PHADP relies on YOU for support. Suggested donations: \$25/individual, \$40/household, and \$100/congregation, or whatever amount is affordable. Checks should be made out to "PHADP" and sent to the above address.

IS IT ENOUGH YET?

In the last 8 months there have been botched executions, men and women have had their convictions overturned and gone home, there have been investigations that have uncovered false testimony, false DNA experts, deliberate acts of hiding evidence by prosecutors and a lot more. So I ask you, the public, when are you going to say enough is enough?

When will the legal team of prosecutors be taken to task for their untrustworthy actions and illegal activities? You decide. They put on false evidence, hide the true evidence, they direct informants testimony, knowing it's false. They lie in open court about a person's character and there is evidence that says the opposite. They are buddy-buddy with judges and court appointed attorneys, to the point where neither will argue what that prosecutor says.

Then there is the issue of money, the prosecution has unlimited access to all experts, where the defending attorney has limited access and there is no money. Lack of experience in capital cases, lack of knowledge of capital law, a lack of determination to defend. Most come in thinking defendants are guilty so there is no effort to fight to clear a clients name.

I leave you with this thought, if there is no money for education, no money for border security, no money for welfare, No money for almost everything the poor has need for, why are they throwing BILLIONS at a system that has so many flaws? Just so they can commit murder in the name of Justice. When is enough enough?

Marcus Williams

LEARNING THE ROW

I must say, that I was expecting a world of ruthless people plotting and scheming the next person's demise. But, to my surprise, it was nothing of the sort and in every way, quite different. For I was truly blessed to have met people, thus far, that are positive and willing to help those of a non-foolish heart.

Although being on death row is by no means a cake walk, the illusion of having to constantly look over your shoulder or worry that someone is going to kill you for what you have, is quite wrong. As long as you're not conducting yourself in a manner that would constitute such actions.

It was always, to my knowledge, that people who were sentenced to death and on death row, were irredeemable. I now know the truth; and the truth is that my prior assumptions were completely wrong and that I had been misled.

Jordaan Creque
Z-795 H-9

"MOMENTS"

Time is a liquid thing here. Decades pass in a blink, years are hardly noticed after a while. Things that happened a year ago seem to have occurred a month ago. Just another day in a cage.

However, this is not to say ours is a lost forever gray world. The sun rises the beasts stir and on occasion one finds a moment.

I was talking with my mom the other day, and as happens, a topic emerged. She made a comment about being happy at times, and I agreed. From there the topic grew wings as we spoke of the things that made us happy.

As it turns out, I'm very easy to please. Music to listen to, food to eat, coffee to drink and Top to smoke and I'm fairly pleased. Long as I can pay my bills and paint my imagination I'm good all day long.

Mom's not that hard to please either. Seems I adopted her traits when she adopted me. hee hee.

I found life is full of these spontaneous bursts of joy. Even in the gray world of prison, solve the right problem, ease the right stress and the world becomes a bright, welcome and easy place to sit back and chill.

I am most thankful for the small moments I snatch here and there. And for the ones who make them possible.

Take a moment and have
A wonderful day!!

Carey Grayson
Z-598 H-11

P.S.

"Life is like a box of chocolates,
Eat it fast as you can, and
spit the nasty ones out."

My momma said so!
hee hee!

Every morning I ask myself, is this how it's gonna be?, and then I take a moment to analyze how it suppose to be. Why should we continue wondering about the simple things, knowing that its more in this world on the table for us to complain about? But we still pointing fingers at each other, wondering who's to blame, that still defeats the purpose if you or me don't never change. Let's get up & stand up it's time to make a difference in change.

The Realist

A Christian Perspective

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Dear Family and Friends,

Greetings and Salutations! For some reason it seems to me that it has been longer than usual since I have sat down to write and connect with you our supporters. So much and so little has been going on at the same time. We have experienced a row-wide shakedown carried out by the DOC's CERT team. For those of us who have been on the row for a while this isn't the first one we have endured and it is more of an inconvenience than anything but for those newer guys it is what they feared. Cells searched, belongings pawed through, objects taken with very little sensitivity by men who could care what the objects taken represent. It had been a while so even some of the older heads had become complacent. And their complacency caused them as much inconvenience and shock due to their being caught unawares.

We haven't experienced a major shakedown on death row for a while just as there have been no executions in a while and yes, there are new guys on the row who have never been here for one. But, there are also so old-heads who have allowed themselves to get complacent and will feel the shock if and when they resume. Thankfully I and the Board and groups within Project Hope do not slip in to complacency. Nor does our Outmate who has seen first hand the State's plans for each and everyone of us here on the row. That is why she has been keeping us abreast of Alabama's threats to once again try and gain a measure of secrecy when it comes to the execution protocol and Alabama's as yet unsuccessful attempts to purchase drugs. You see whether or not we have been complacent is only half of the story because our opponents have not been. Esther knows it. The Board knows it. And now (if not before) you our supporters know it. The struggle continues.

On a brighter note we have been joined in our fight to abolish the death penalty by some notable former death penalty supporters who have realized the financial and (hopefully) moral cost of the death penalty. We should embrace them into the fold. And they are the people we have been trying to reach and educate. It has been our mission to reach out and educate citizens on the subject of

capital punishment and we should recognize and even celebrate when a long time opponent or someone who has never really thought much about it comes out against the death penalty. (On the row, we are not too awful particular about who our allies are and really, can you blame us?) So, for those of you who have been in the trenches with us for so long, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your enduring love and support. And for those of you new to the fight be prepared for a marathon, not a sprint and thank you for joining us. We can use all the help we can get. Just keeping it positively real. Someone has got to do it. Keep Hope Alive!

Ronald B. Smith Jr.
Editor, "A Christian Perspective"
Z-586/ H-6a

"Church People"

I have heard it said before... Church people are too serious. They don't smile, or laugh at the humor of the world. It is not divine to laugh, they say... Really? Did they not know. Joy is a power source that is given by God as a gift to you. St. John 16:33 says in short, "In this world you will have trouble...But be of good cheer...I have overcome the world." Wow! That is something to be excited about. When you can laugh in spite of your circumstances it shows that (1)The world is not the source of your security and (2)temporary situations don't control your joy. Paul said, "Even though I am being poured out like a drink offering...I am glad and rejoice." Phil 2:17-18. So, you too should be glad and rejoice with me. I like for my joy to be contagious. Just between me and you, it is a secret witnessing tool that I have.

Some church people can't enjoy a meal because the world is starving, or thank God for their clothes because the world is naked, or smile because the world is sad. They know nothing of balance, and they are miserable because of it. They have little motivation to bring people to Christ, because that would make others as miserable as they themselves feel. They think the Gospel is "good news" until you obey it, then it becomes an endless guilt-trip. There are leisure centers, sport centers, diet centers and guilt centers. This last group are called "Churches"! The endless harping on the string of guilt, is part of the reason for all this gloom and uncertainty.

In closing, give yourself permission to laugh. It will keep you healthy and make the experience you talk about, alot more attractive to others. The experience you are having in Christ, should be a reflection to others, that they also need such an experience. So, as you go in to the football season, don't be afraid to cheer out loud and yell, WAR EAGLE! Don't worry it is not a sin.

Smile,
Anthony Tyson
Z-641/N-17a

-Walking Still-

You wanted poetry
you wanted the truth
Well God's gift to me
was the ability to see thru poof
So tell me why my every scar
is from one of God's youth?
The smiles are fake,
so are the handshakes,
and hugs,
The many bugs
in this Godly field planted
are Christian thugs
whose worldly concerns
are fought with back rubs.
But anything Christ
is passed with shoulder shrugs.
It's all a lie
within
this Lion's den.
"Brother's" in Christ
So how on earth do I win
who said I wasn't forsaken
who said I wasn't forgotten
Both are lifelong occurrences.
So tell me why with God should it stop?
Lost in a whirlwind
and I don't see God
trapped in a world of sin
Bleeding Christ
leaking like this pen
I'm out...

BY: Tony Barksdale
Z-611/F-24a

Twin's Hope

I'm known as Twin, but I am actually the last born of a set of triples. Growing up I had envisioned being a productive member of society. I got good grades in school and enjoyed being with my brothers, except when my mother would dress us all alike and send us off to school. My mother died when I was 13 and things began to go down hill for me ever since. I got expelled from school and had to relocate to another city shortly after my mother died. Tuskegee became my new home. We were considered outsiders there. I began to do all sorts of illegal things like dealing drugs. I had no supervision back then so I didn't even go to school half of the time. When I turned 18 I was headed

to prison with a sentence of 15 years for robbery. I did five and a half years there and was released in 1997. I had no skills to offer for a good paying job, so I began hustling drugs again. I didn't understand the concept that I was really helping to destroy my community back then. Being on death row now, I have time to think over the many mistakes I have made in my life. I know now that if I was given a chance to change my past, I would do it. Quickly. I'm not the same person I was. Everyone can change.

In the event I am unable to get out of this unfair sentence of death I only hope that my son BJ doesn't make the same mistake his father did and there will be a productive member of society named Brent Martin here in Alabama.

Brent Martin
AKA Twin
Z-746/H-15a

-No Retaliation-

As He watched from the Highest of highs, and clearest of clear, viewing rooms, before Him, an execution was taking place. Three men at once, but His attentions were on the man in the middle. The man's arms stretched out on both sides of Him, held there by nails. Legs stretched out beneath Him, as if they were reaching for stable ground, held in place also with nails. Thorns puncturing the halo of His head. The one watching, THE FATHER. The innocent man (free of any sins) being executed, THE SON. The execution, not botched, just occurring during barbaric times. (You would think, in a modern society, we as a people would've moved away from such barbarism.) A stay of execution, clemency, and even freedom from being executed his, as his father is the Almighty. However, this is what He came here for, to die for our sins. So, His father watched. He could've sought revenge. He could've retaliated. He could've not sent His son to his death... for our sins! However, He did send Him, and He watched from His own viewing room, as His only begotten son was teased, ridiculed, tortured and murdered (executed) by self-serving politicians, who had prodded the masses into becoming a blood lusting mob. He allowed His son to go through all of that, for the purpose of teaching, and wiping our slates clean. However, some just didn't get it (and still don't). Love, compassion, understanding, mercy and forgiveness are all a part of His intended teachings, but what He got instead was, mere mortals pretending to be God. Mere mortals, pretending to be Him. The Father, who watched His son (an innocent man) executed, and the only one capable of the ultimate punishment, the ultimate revenge, the ultimate retaliation...Forgave!!! The son, the innocent victim, hanging there on the cross (his time periods... electric chair, lethal injection gurney, gas chamber and firing squad) preparing Himself to meet His destiny, turns to one of

the two true criminals on each side of Him, as the man says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest unto thy Kingdom", and He says in return, "Verily I say unto thee today shalt thou be with me in paradise". HE FORGAVE!

Three men on crosses, two criminals, and one man innocent of not just ant crimes, but innocent of any sins, period! Do you stick with the saying, "Well, we got two criminals off the streets?" Do you continue to play God, and seek your own brand of vengeance, your own brand of injustice (retaliation)? Or, is it far past the time that, the intended lessons were learned (not the ones made up to serve your own needs and purposes)!

May God bless you, keep you and continue to forgive you... for we all have sinned (and continue to do so) in our lives!

Anthony Boyd

Z-578/N-9a

Poisoning or Beheading?

It was a horrible thing that happened to James Foley, the American Journalist who was recently beheaded by ISIS. I don't think anyone would disagree with that. But, my question is, would it have been easier for Americans to have found out that he had been murdered/executed by lethal injection instead? I would guess that it wouldn't have changed a thing. So why does it matter for people accused/convicted of murder? Why aren't people just as outraged when they hear of a convicted prisoner being poisoned on a gurney as they would be if he were beheaded with a dull knife in the desert?

I suppose there are many answers to this. One being that people can be outraged to different degrees. Another reason is that some people probably believe a convicted prisoner is lucky he even gets a clean death (or that they attempt to give him one in the first place.) Even people who are anti-death may hold on to this notion that some prisoners are lucky they are poisoned instead of beheaded, but I digress. I think the main reason people are so outraged by this is because they saw it, (or at least they saw his face right before it happened) and that gave them a sick feeling in there stomach. Every time they turn on their television or read the news, there he is in his orange jumpsuit, kneeled down in the desert about to take his last breath, looking into the camera and talking to his family and the public on the other side.

What really made the difference was that the media actually shows it and reports on it. Lending a subtle, sympathetic tone to the victim. When they do report on executions, it is almost like they are giving the score of last night's football game, with no discernible emotion. My point is that if American executions were reported on with the same manner as terrorist executions, more people would be outraged. When they took executions out of the public view and hid them in prisons, they hid them from the majority of the public as well. (I suppose that may have been their goal.) But imagine if every execution

the media reported on was paired with a video of the prisoner lying on a gurney, a needle in his arm, saying his last words, before he takes his last breath and looking into the camera wondering why so many people have a problem watching him die.

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The Will of the People

We often hear that the death penalty is the will of the people. Though now in 2014 support for the death penalty has declined, the majority of American citizens are still in support of this practice. I often wonder exactly who are the people that are being polled to reach these statistics? In my opinion, most know very little of the death penalty and its process. I think in the mix of politics and fear-mongering, we have forgotten about the will of God!

We swear on the Bible in court to tell the truth, our currency bears the words "In God We Trust" on it, and we use our religious beliefs to verify our morality for social standing. But, in the process of taking another human life, we throw God out the door! Some disturbed supporters of the death penalty even go so far as to say, "kill them all and let God sort them out." Aren't we using our religious beliefs only when it is beneficial? Would not this be considered a blasphemy? Is it okay to plot a persons death for 15-20 years, to kill them for killing, in order to then say, "thou shalt not kill"?

I think it is quite safe to say that the will of God is not to kill to show killing is wrong. We continue to do so though and wish mercy on the soul of the condemned, how ironic! Who am I to judge though, lest I be judged right? I can only plant teh seed in hope that it roots and brings about change. "God freely gave us mercy, why can't we give others mercy"-Joel Osteen

Fact: Capital punishment goes against every religion. Although isolated passages of religious scripture have been quoted in support of the death penalty, almost all religious groups in the U.S. regard executions as immoral. (Source: Death penalty Focus

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