

# On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



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## THIS TOO IS PHADP

During one of my weekly exchanges with one of our Board a statement was made that stayed with me. "When someone new comes to the Row I listen to him, really listen to him because I have realized from my own experience that it is likely no one ever has." What insight, what awareness from someone who not only has not been psychologically trained, but who didn't even finish high school!

Most of us don't know how to listen actively and usually are only looking for an opening to interject our own thoughts, and if possible do one better, myself included! To hear my friend make that statement moved me deeply because I remember when I was working professionally, clients telling me how important that initial intake was: "the first time anyone ever really listened to me."

I did not know my friend before he came to death row. Was he always so open to learning and growing or had life taken over so that there was never time to really think? I don't know the answer to that question, but I would like to believe that Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty was and continues to be part of his growth, giving him an opportunity to fulfill his potential; his and those of others.

Yes, we are a death penalty abolition organization and the Alabama state affiliate of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. On the Outside we have persuaded 42 City Councils/County Commissions in our state to endorse a moratorium; we have a list of Murder Victim Family Members, Law Enforcement officers and Alabama Organizations who have done the same and currently the Board is reaching out to other State Affiliates.

These are all achievements which should not be minimized and we don't. But there is also the other part of PHADP, less visible because it happens on death row. I would argue that that is where the really hard work takes place, the work on self. Not all do it and certainly not all to the same degree, but there is no doubt that to be able to see it happening and to know that PHADP is part of this growth is for me the most rewarding aspect of being part of our organization. Thank you to all who allow me a window into this part of PHADP, the part that for me is of equal importance to anything we might achieve on the outside.

Esther

Greetings From The Editor's Desk:

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

As the rollercoaster ride of capital punishment continues across this State (and this nation). Those of us on the frontlines continue to keep our fingers on the pulse of a multitude of issues concerning everything from State finances, State politics, legal filings and decisions. All the while dealing with everyday trials and tribulations. For example, the Executive Director of PHADP, while recovering from hip surgery also had to contend with a massive changeover on the Board, on-going projects, plans for future projects, correspondence from supporters and a major ruling of SCOTUS that affected every death row inmate in Alabama. Though no executions are planned for the State in the foreseeable future, we know that things can change with a suddenness that those new to the struggle don't fully understand. The wheels of justice turn slowly until they don't. Then time seems to speed up and before you know it you are out of appeals and looking for help when the assistance you want cannot be given by those you seek it from.

It is imperative that individuals educate themselves regarding issues pertinent to capital punishment. Project Hope offers our website [www.phadp.org](http://www.phadp.org) as a resource. Our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/projecthopetoabolishthedeathpenaltyin-alabama> lists not only the latest topical information concerning Alabama but lists ways to get involved. Earlier is better.

A study recently published in Louisiana once again speaks to the racial discrimination that is systemic to the administration of capital punishment. The study deals with prosecutors using peremptory strikes to dismiss African-Americans from sitting on juries with a death sentence at stake, at a disturbingly higher rate than others. Several other States including Alabama, North Carolina and Georgia. Though this racial disparity is dismissed by the court it is evident to most everyone else.

Don't give up. Keep informed. Share what you have learned. Let your voice be heard. And most importantly keep Hope alive!

Sincerely in Christ,

**Ronald B. Smith Jr.**  
**Chairman/PHADP**  
**Z-586/H1-6a**

Alabama News  
2015 3rd Qtr

\* SCOTUS, in a 5-4 decision, ruled that states could continue to use midazolam in executions.

\* Justice and Mercy (JAM) and PHADP will submit as joint proposal for a death penalty moratorium at the September conference of Alabama Arise.

\* David Roby Keaton passed away July 3, 2015 at the age of 63. He was the first death row inmate to be exonerated, and a founding member of Witness to Innocence. The Board offers our sincerest condolences to his family and loved ones.

\* Carlos Kenedy received a new trial because he was not allowed to represent himself at trial. He is currently in the Mobile County jail with a tentative trial date in Feb. 2016.

\* Connecticut Supreme Court rules 4-3 that the death penalty violates the state constitution, it "no longer comports with contemporary standards of decency and no longer serves any legitimate penological purpose."

\* PHADP members will participate by mail in a Washington D.C. rally for C.U.R.E. The theme for the rally is "The day the silence ends" encouraging lawmakers to "Stop Jailing Addictions."

\* PHADP Student Rep. Petra Jackson, graced the Board with her perceptions, on the phone during the August 12th Board meeting.

\* Oppose, began a writing campaign to California Unions, Alabama Churches and to Kevin Johnson, Mayor of Sacramento and the current President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

\* Alabama Arise Annual Meeting is Sept. 12th. Please put this on your calendars. If you come as our rep. you can cast 7 votes to keep death penalty abolition on Arise's agenda.

\* Alabama Episcopalian Dioceses renewed stance against capital punishment.

\* PHADP Advisory Board member Sam Sullins continues to write weekly letters to Senator Cam Ward and other Alabama legislators. The Board not only offers our gratitude to Sam but, also our admiration for Sam's continuity and creativity in his efforts.

\* Multiple States including North Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi Alabama and most recently Louisiana have studies that prove prosecutors used peremptory challenges to strike potential black jurors at a higher rate than others in the last decade.

### Why The Death Penalty and Politics Don't Mix

The death penalty in the twenty-first century has become fueled by politics. The death penalty being the one issue that society has mixed feelings about, allows space for politics to abuse it. When the death penalty was reinstated, it was intended for the most vicious and unthinkable murders. Now with the death penalty being politically motivated, it is now being applied to murders it wasn't intended for.

With society being split on their views of the death penalty, politicians have found a way to manipulate its cause. Politicians that have the reputation of being tough on crime, have worked to convince society that we need the death penalty. When politics becomes involved in the taking of life, it is a dangerous and deadly mixture. If a politician will go to any extreme to gain popularity or political office, the appreciation for human life diminishes. Politics blinds the eyes to the value of human life. Once this has happened, lives are lost and society is cheated.

In 1976, when the death penalty was reinstated, it was intended for the most vicious and unthinkable crimes of murder. Through time this has change dramatically. Now capital murder charges can be persued in many types of murder cases. This is because it is now being left up to the prosecutors office to try a defendant for capital murder. It is also left to the discretion of the prosecutor to seek the death penalty. This has also become an act of politics. Even prosecutors and judges search for political gain. Prosecutors become judges and judges become Supreme Court judges. If you take away the political gain, you have to think would the death penalty then be applied more fairly?

Citizens across the U.S. need to become aware of the injustice politics has caused with the death penalty. It's sad that we wait until we are affected personally, when a family member or friend is facing death by the state. This happens everyday, and until we as society make the politicians change their ways, the deadly mixture of the death penalty and politics will continue to explode throughout our cities and families.

By: Nicholas Acklin

### The Un-United States

Since when has the United States of America ever been united? I have no recollection of it being so in my lifetime. Whether it is issues of war, race or religion this country has been divided. Even in matters of law, rules and regulations vary from State to State. For instance, some States have banned capital punishment, while others are willing to do any and everything to strap a convicted murderer to a gurney an force lethal

legally executed. But that swing was weightless because it was contradicted by several botched executions. In fact, 750 milligrams was used on Woods and he took 2 hours to finally die. He suffered repulsively.

Midazolam landed on it's back several times but was pulled back to it's feet by several US Justices who were seemingly upset at anti-death penalty proponents. This case was about the midazolam effect. The question was, "Is midazolam reliable and effectively dependable to keep a human unconscious long enough to not feel pain after the other 2 drugs were forced into the veins of humans. These drugs of lethal potency causes severe pain.(Potassium chloride, does)

The botched ruling was made to be about keeping the death penalty alive and made the cruel and unusual violation of the EIGHTH Amendment moot. the five Justices never invited the Eighth Amendment into the courtroom and they pulled a last minute coup de grace. A 5 to 4 vote to say long live the death penalty even if it is a violation of the Eighth Amendment yo the US Constitution.

BY: Internal Exiler 33  
O-14

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Our Mission

Our mission is to educate the people, our loved ones and ourselves. To give the people the ins and outs of the law. Most people are dumbfounded to their surroundings and think that what they see and hear is to be the truth. Well, i got news for you. Since I've been on Life Row, I've seen more guys get off the row than executed. More and more going home. New trials because of the motivation of the lawyers and the people that care. So, why must they that are blind to the circumstances be so judgemental to the people just because they hear death row? We have lives, even if we are by the State laws condemned to die. But the fight must continue. Some may fall but the mission will always go on until the States that have the death penalty stop torturing without a care. Stop being unfair. Stop putting the families of both the victim and the inmate through more gruesome acts of violence. Last but not least stop the whole death penalty process all together. Thanks and be blessed.

The Realist

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Deterrent

I've heard this word thrown out on too many occasions by judges and prosecutors. A deterrent to murder is to murder. Where is the logic in that. Furthermore, where is the proof. The murder rate is higher than 10 years ago, 20 years ago or even 30 and 40 years ago. So what exactly is capital punishment deterring? I can't answer that because there is no right answer there. The only thing that deters crime is education. Equal education. By that I mean, educating everyone on the same level. Suburban schools, inner city schools as well as private schools. We all know that suburban schools and private schools are predominantly white and at least middle income. While inner city schools are mostly black and latino. The inner city schools are in such disrepair, if you were to actually look at them, you would think that there is no way an American school would look like this. Inadequate teachers and crumbling buildings. But, politicians, judges and prosecutors would rather spend billions on a system that is flawed and error filled. When they could easily build and restore schools in these areas. The movie "Lean on Me", showed the world what could be done with the right people involved and caring about education. I say that because it is based on a true story. I get the feeling that voters don't care and that whatever the politicians say is gold. Their schools are not affected. There is a small percentage of people able to vote in the inner city and even less of a percentage that actually vote. Why is that? Education. Knowledge is power. Knowledge is the deterrent. Not murder.

Thank you,  
 Marcus Williams  
 G-8

**Execute  
 Justice  
 Not  
 People**

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Supreme Ruse: The Botched Ruling

Midazolam is still on it's feet after being technically knocked out and unconscious by several US Supreme Court Justices. Midazolam was not physically in shape when it stepped into the legal ring, sweating evasively and walking on a cane of falsehood and legally deceptive testimony. Midazolam threw an empty punch at us by stating that it renders condemned humans unconscious before capital penalty States inject the second and third drugs, a paralytic and potassium chloride. Evidence reveals in several botched executions that midazolam isn't always reliable and put men and women at serious risk of being burned alive at the gurney, while tied down and fried internally, chemically to death.

Dr. Evans, the State expert, helped midazolam bob and weave in the court over and under the Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution, which prohibits cruel and unusual punishment, by claiming for example, 500 milligrams of midazolam is the amount needed to effectively render a human unconscious to be

doses of toxic chemicals and poisons into their body until they stop breathing. And it doesn't matter if it is a somewhat timely and peaceful execution or a 2 hour torturous procedure of gasping writhing convulsions. Those representing our State's government and justice system are willing to lie, hide evidence and break the law themselves in order to kill someone for committing a murder.

It's bad enough that much of our country believes that capital punishment is constitutional, that justice is being served when murdering someone for taking another's life, but it's much worse when the requirements vary from State to State, Some States require a unanimous, 12-0 vote to sentence a convict to death, as it should be when dealing out the ultimate, irreversible punishment. Then we move to the south, only to find out the death penalty becomes easier and easier to apply. Alabama requires a 10-2 vote, and Florida only requires a majority, 7-5 vote. Now, does this sound fair, just, and does it sound like a country of united peoples and States? There is nothing united about it! Will this country ever be able to come together and live up to it's name? Until it does, this country will continue to decline. United we stand, but divided we fall.

Castro

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Death

Death is the thing we see and don't know. Death is something that starts at the start of life. As start to live you start to die. Yes, death comes to us all.

It is the way we die that we all think about. we don't know we think about it but, we do. In the subconscious part of our brain we think about it. most people don't know how they will die. I think to have the knowledge would be a kind of torture.

Just think if everybody had a clock on their heads that told you the time you would die but, you could not see it. What would that be like to you? You would look around you and know the date that everybody would die and they would know the same about you. What would your world be like then? How would you spend your time then?

Knowing if you miss this date your time would move faster or waiting on someone else can make your time slower. Think if God sent you a letter saying, "Sorry, you moved too slow. I'm taking 2 years off your life." Or if he said, "I should have put an "I" right there. So, you get 6 years back have fun with them."

Death will come for you. The question is: where will you be and will you know?

Jessie MDY Phillips

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### Wanna Know a Secret?

Most people dream of being happy someday, when everything in their life lines up perfectly and they don't have to work so hard or worry about as much. When the bills are paid and the kids are raised and they can finally be content. Well, they are wasting precious time dreaming, because Paul tells us the secret to being content at any time, under any circumstance. "Rejoice in the Lord always...Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;...And My God shall supply all your need according to His riches." (Phil 4:4,6,19) The real contentment that God Can provide for us when we rejoice in Him "surpasses all understanding, and will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."(4:7) So instead of dreaming of being happy someday, take the opportunity to fill each and every day with joy and strength and peace.

Bart Johnson  
F-18 / 2778

Execute  
Justice  
People



# A Christian Perspective

Produced By  
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty



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Hello Everyone,

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Is it just me or is it really Hot...I'm just checking. Well, it's about to come to an end hopefully. But truth be told...I hate the cold too...(smile). I guess I should talk about what's important right now...Cecil the lion, WOW! I stopped caring about what was on the news about a year ago. But what I would do, is catch the first 15 minutes of Good Morning, because in those 15 minutes, you will learn what's important to America and for 2 weeks now, it's been a wild animal in the safari...oh, my bad let me correct that Cecil the Lion. This countries priorities are screwed. We have Supreme Court justices saying, I quote "It is okay to execute an innocent man." But if he's guilty and has a constitutional violation in his case, we'll spare his life. Cecil was killed within the restricted area of killing wild animals and there has been an uproar because this Dentist should have noticed the collar. That's Amazing!.. Our Executive Director, Esther Brown, has taught me a lot over the last decade. Two of the things she taught me in one conversation were loyalty and priorities. In 2011 the nation was in an uproar about the execution of Troy Davis, a man accused of killing a police officer in Georgia. He professed his innocence until they killed him, and several witnesses that testified against him recanted their testimony, saying they were pressured to lie. So there was a huge campaign to save his life. And I forget the organization, but they reached out to Esther (PHADP) and asked if we would join their cry for justice. Esther told them no, but let me explain why. During that same time we had a scheduled execution. My best friend and brother Derrick Mason. She said, no one reached out to her, to help our cry for justice for Derrick Mason, who had a trial judge later admit in a letter that he was young and inexperienced at the time. And if he had known what he knows now he's very sure that Derrick Mason wouldn't have received the death penalty.

So Esther cried out in Alabama, not in Georgia, or in D.C. We had a problem right here at home. She stayed loyal to where her heart was...her priority was here in Alabama. So you see America your heart will go where your priorities are...botched executions executing the innocent, unjustly convicting men, imprisoning men wrongfully for 30 years on death row, and illegally executing them I guess all of that doesn't meet the level of concern of killing Cecil...But I do see the comparison between Cecil and America... They both kill their own...Lesson Learned, Lesson Shared.

In the safari,  
Vice Chairman  
Anthony Tyson  
N-17 / Z641

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### The Unexpected

What do you expect out of life? Can life behind bars be a life worth living? A lot of us have been locked away for well over ten years. Most of us here can only picture a life inside this 5 X 8, yet some of us dare to dream of a life outside these prison walls. I believe that these opportunities that seem impossible are very much attainable, believe in the unexpected.

We find ourselves lost in another hot humid summer at Holman. The temperatures have started to quench the expectations of some of the guys here and things seem back to normal. The guys here have allowed the miracles that took place here in the spring of the year where three guys were set free from death row to be placed in the back of their minds. God isn't a respecter of persons, but He is a rewarder of faith. So can you have the faith to believe God for the unexpected?

The recent Supreme Court ruling in the Glossip v. Gross case where the lethal injection drug midazolam was ruled constitutional. Yet the justices were extremely split on the issue. There were some unexpected opinions about the constitutionality of the death penalty in America all together. We need to continue to allow our hope in living a life outside of these prison walls to burn inside of us so our dream of being free continues to be a possibility.

I Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of a man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." We tend to fall into a state of unexpectancy when our situations start to slow down and we don't see the hand of God upon us or our families or our cases we stop looking for the good things to happen. So we need to start expecting to see the unexpected whether you have faith in God or not, because the rain falls on the just and unjust. So expect the unexpected and be on the lookout for God to do everything you don't expect Him to do!

Jeffery Lee  
The Caring Christian

Where Does Religion Truly Stand?

When it comes to the death penalty, the big question for all the religions is, where does religion truly stand on the issue? The religious groups in America are broken into three groups, first 48% favor the death penalty, second, 45% oppose the death penalty, and the remaining 7% have no official position. The biggest two Christian groups that favor the death penalty are the Southern Baptist Convention and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Opposed to the death penalty you have the American Baptists and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. How can two groups have the same teaching and a different position on the death penalty?

The ones who are truly opposed are the United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, and the Catholic Church. All with the same teachings and they are opposed to the death penalty. But these others that make up the 7% with no official position like the National Baptist Convention, Assemblies of God, and the Mormons all have the same teachings, and could voice their opposition to the death penalty if they really wanted to. Here at Project Hope we want to educate everyone about the truths about the death penalty, including any religious groups who want to hear the truth.

An Angel in the Shadows

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A Moment in the Spotlight

Fear me, honor me, give me all the glory

Protect me, relieve me so we can hear another story

Feed me nonsense, rather good or bad

Name me guilty or innocent so I can be glad

Try to challenge me to stop the moment of success

Well time is almost up, now you are really gone see me at my best

Rather electrocution, injection or the firing chair, vengeance is mine and death is in the air.

The Realist

## THE FAITH OF YOUR HEART

Last week, I was having a conversation with a friend and he asked me, "Shouldn't the man and his wife who set fire to an ex-wife's house and killed two adults and two children and an unborn baby be executed?" My response was an absolute "No." He was in a hurry and we did not discuss my statement. Later, when we discuss executing or not executing the man and his wife, I will ask him, if he is a man of head faith or heart faith? After I heard of the killings, my head said, "Kill them," but then my heart said, "Do not kill them." Belief in Jesus Christ and whether or not the claims are true is a matter of the head. Belief is a passive verb and should be an action verb. Within a second or two, my heart took over and I said to myself, "Do not kill them; it is contrary to the faith of your heart."

Faith is not a matter of the head, but matters of the heart. In our Christian tradition, the heart is a metaphor for deep level of the self, a level below our thinking and emotions. The heart is deeper than our head, deeper than our conscious and the ideas we have in our head. Faith is a way of the heart, not the way of the head. Christianity is a way of the heart. Faith is faithfulness to our relationship with God - love, loyalty, allegiance and a commitment of self. We must be attentive to God through the simple means of worship, prayer, practice, and a life of compassion and justice. To be faithful to God means not only to love God, but to love that which God loves. Capital murder is contrary to the way of the Christian heart.

If these two people burned that family, it was wrong. However, killing them will not bring the family back and in the majority of the cases will not enable the family to feel "good." Life without parole is the route to go. It gives the killer a chance to repent and to grow and change. Through a prison Kairos program their faith can grow, and become the faith of their heart. Most important, they can work in the prison and pay for counseling for the victims' family.

Revenge is no better than what the killers did.

**\*\*\*\* The above letter to Senator Cam Ward, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee was written by Advisory Board Member Sam L Sullins. It was copied to other Alabama legislators and church dignitaries. This is one way to get your voice heard. You need not wait until an execution date is set before voicing your concerns!\*\*\*\***

## Pressure

Pressure can come from alot of different places which includes bad places as well as good. So all pressure isn't a bad thing. Some bad pressure includes high blood pressure which is a bad thing for the human body. A good kind of pressure includes the making of a diamond, which remains under an intense amount of pressure in a dark place in the earth for a long time.

When someone finds themselves placed in isolation like the 8X5 foot cell that is used to house men on death row in the State of Alabama. There are a few factors that can cause the pressure to build inside the cell. One is the loss of communication with friends, family and loved ones. The loss of personal connections with family causes a person to feel abandoned and causes a person's mind to feel alone as the pressure starts to build. Being alone can cause guys to fall into a depressed state of mind and cause men to find comfort in all the wrong places.

Pressure not only is found in prison, it is also found in the "free" world. The pressure of living in the world with all of the dangers and crimes that goes on in it adds to the extreme pressure that people are constantly under. The responsibilities of paying bills and raising kids while maintaining a home can be a constant source of pressure on the ones that are maintaining the home. Even politicians and government officials are under extreme pressure to make good on the promises made during the election process like being morally competent on being tough on crime. When these promises fail, it adds to the pressure applied to the politicians.

All pressures aren't the same. All pressures aren't bad because even diamonds need pressure to be formed. The pressure of prison is an extreme type of pressure that causes guys to make a choice to be better in their lives because being away from family and friends provides a pressure to you with the reason to change your ways, to do right and make better choices in life. Yet the wrong kind of pressure can lead to health problems and cause people to make bad choices. The pressure of death row involves mental pressures, physical pressure and emotional pressure. The intensity of our situation will break a person down if you allow it to. We must take the pressure that is on us to produce diamond results in our lives and our families' lives!

Jeffery Lee  
The Caring Christian  
Z-674/G-1

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Where is Evidence Hiding?

I've been reading lately on these cases like Mr. Brown of Texas and Mr. Ray Hinton of Alabama who were falsely charged with murders they did not do, but when the day came for them to prove themselves innocent with a key piece of evidence, that piece of evidence just disappeared. So I have to ask the question, where is evidence hiding? To find the answer to this question look at the two definitions of evidence. Look at what it is and the types of evidence.

Evidence- law, something presented in a legal proceeding, as a statement of a witness, an object which bears on or establishes a point in question: distinguished from testimony and proof. Now let's look at the type of evidence, which is state's evidence State's Evidence- law, evidence given by or for the prosecution in a criminal case, usually evidence given by a criminal against his or her associates.

Now we see what evidence is and the type of evidence it is, and we see who is touching the evidence. That is the District Attorney. The District Attorneys office in Texas and Alabama hid these men's evidence proving their innocence out of selfish pride, because the D.A.s said these are the only men accused of the crime they are guilty, and we won't stop until they are on death row.

These D.A.s thought they had put these men away for good, but the book of Proverbs says in 11:2 "When pride cometh, then cometh shame," and Proverbs 16:18 says "pride goeth before destruction." The D.A.s pride was their downfall because Mr. Brown and Mr. Hinton were freed by the same states that were trying to kill them. Because for one they did what the book of Matthew says in 7:7 "seek and ye shall find," they found their evidence. For Mr. Brown it was phone records, and for Mr. Hinton the gun was not a match. Plus these men had help from the best criminal appeals lawyers. Here at Project Hope we don't hide the facts about anything. We show you the hiding places that the state tries to use to hide the evidence and the truth.

An Angel in the Shadows

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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.**

