

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

# On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



VOL. 19 ISSUE IV  
OCT. - DEC. 2015



## HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

In musing what Christmas topic I might write about this year and in thinking about past popular Christmas songs I realized that whether one is roasting chestnuts at the proverbial open fire, dashing through the snow in a one horse open sleigh and all the other Christmas activities people sing about, they are all connected with home.

And yet the manger was certainly not home nor were the shepherds sitting in front of a cozy fire warming their toes when the angels appeared to them. The association of Christmas and home came later. And so I would like to dedicate this article to all who cannot be home for Christmas and who perhaps have never even experienced what we think of as a home. We know who they are. They are our brothers and sisters. They are on death row, in prison, homeless on the street, living from one fix to the next, in hospitals and nursing homes, the lonely, the abused, the old, the handicapped, in other words the forgotten. There was no room at the inn at the first Christmas and for so many of our brothers and sisters there still is no room at the inn, only a lonely, cold and dark stable.

The saying "home is where the heart is" invites me to continue with my musings. If home is the place where the heart is, then it would make sense that we all have a home to offer to those who have none. We can be the innkeeper who does not turn away those without a home. In other words, we can open our hearts to our brothers and sisters who will not be home for the holidays and welcome them into our hearts. And when we do, it will be important for us to remember that in order for a home to be a home it has to be more than for just a day. When we do that, each in our unique way, we will have the privilege of truly celebrating the joy of Christmas. And of course if you want to roast chestnuts before an open fire and enjoy a Christmas sleigh ride that is wonderful, and please believe me that your joy will be enhanced because you found room for your brother and sister at the inn, the inn which is your heart.

Wishing you the peace, joy and love that is Christmas,

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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Penalty in Alabama

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

Season's Greetings! Wow! What a year we had.  
All glory to God. I am blessed with loving and  
caring friends and family, which not everyone  
can say. I am blessed with good mental and physical  
faculties, which not everyone can say. I have  
a strong desire and outlet to do and be positive,  
which not everyone can say. And I am a death row  
inmate. Think about that.

This year I had the pleasure of introducing  
myself to a lot of people who kindly reciprocated  
with well wishes, prayers and support. I work  
with a young Board who support our mutual goals  
with energy and enthusiasm. And of course I have  
an Esther. If you don't have one, I suggest you  
find one. I could never say enough about her and  
she sticks with us anyway. Me especially. She  
truly does magic.

I want to congratulate our Death Row Christmas  
Card Winners. First place: Mr. Albert Mack Second  
place: Mr. Oscar Doster Third place: Mr. Chris  
Price Thank you guys for your efforts and artistic  
creativity.

As some of you know we have revamped our Daimler  
petition. If you haven't already done so please  
check it out on our Facebook page. And if you  
have then thank you. It is not always possible  
to thank everyone that I should but, special thanks  
are in order to Tanya and Ursula, Ed, Louis, Jim  
and Shelly, Brandon, Sylvia, Petra, Bryan and  
everyone at EJI, Callie, Robin, Sam, Claudia and  
everyone at Lifespark, all of our friends at JAM,  
Gary and the Padgetts and certainly not least  
Jon and everyone at the Capital Defenders for  
all that you do. Know that you are appreciated  
and that what you do matters, as much as life  
and death. Seriously. To Esther's whole family  
thank you for letting us "Hog the Esther". We  
would truly be lost without her. And a personal  
thanks to my mom and dad for supporting me and  
the things I am doing and trying to do even though  
I do such a poor job of explaining what I am doing  
and why. And for trying to understand even when  
I can't explain. To my son, Jon you are still  
my joy and I love you always. Your dad is really  
trying to do good and someday I hope you can be  
as proud of me as I am of you.

Thank you to Don Blocker for accepting the  
mantle as Project Hope's Spiritual Adviser. I  
can't think of a better man for the job.

A special thank you to Judy for always stepping  
in and showing up when we need you most. It was  
a pleasure working with you again.

And thank you to all who are helping us to  
Keep Hope Alive!

Ronald B. Smith Jr.  
Z-586/H1-6A

The Table and the Tree

I'll start by saying Happy Holidays to everyone.

As the aromas fill the house and everyone is lost in their back and forth, lost in conversations as many are just catching up and of course there are those who are glued to the TV screens, as a "fully inflated" football flies through the air, and many miss it! Many of those there aren't noticing the one that is soaking it all up, more so than any others. See, he hasn't experienced this for a while. 30 years to be exact. The State of Alabama had stripped this innocent man of his freedom, placed him on death row and had every intention of murdering him. No more Thanksgiving! No more Christmas! No more family togetherness!

The house is beautifully illuminated by strings and strings of differently colored lights. There's a chill in the night air but inside it is nice and warm. There is a tree on the inside of the house. It is beautifully illuminated by strings of colored lights as well. It seems to serve as a safe-haven for many multi-shaped boxes, wrapped in colored paper. There is candy, fruits, nuts and food scattered all about. The older family members watch as the little ones breach the safe-haven and destroy the colored wrappings, along with the boxes inside to get to the present it contained. He watches, with a smile on his face, tears in his eyes and warmth in his heart because he gets just how amazing it truly is for him to be a part of this. 15 years the State of Alabama stole from him. They sent him to death row and planned to murder him. No apologies afterwards. No presents bought!

Still it is the holiday season. Thanksgiving and Christmas and both are home with their families... Anthony Ray Hinton and William "Ziggy" Ziegler. Set another couple plates at the tables and put a few extra presents under those trees. Hope is alive and well! A Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!

Happy Holidays to Everyone!  
Be Blessed  
Anthony Boyd N-9

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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.**



Alabama News  
2015 4th Qtr

\* Alabama Arise members picked 2016 issues at their annual meeting, which drew a record crowd. Our Development Officer Brandon Fountain along with Shelley Douglass from Justice and Mercy and Mary's House gave a great death penalty reform presentation. We thank them and all of the delegates who voted at the meeting to make "our" issue a priority for 2016.

\* Amelia Platts Boynton Robinson passed away August 26, 2015. She would not want us to mourn, so we remember her legacy and look forward to rejoicing with her on the other side.

\* Montez Spradley, who spent 3 years on Alabama's death row and another 9 years in prison has finally been released.

\* The death penalty repeal in Nebraska is on hold pending a vote in 2016. Fortunately, efforts by the state to obtain execution drugs have been thwarted by the FDA.

\* Missouri overtakes Texas as the state with the highest per capita execution rate. Meanwhile executions are on hold in Oklahoma over concerns regarding incorrect drugs used.

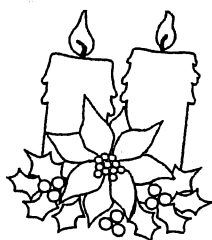
\* Pope Francis visited the United States. In his speech before congress he called for worldwide death penalty abolition. His words and his presence brought light and hope for the future.

\* PHADP Development Officer Brandon Fountain has accepted a position with South Carolina Appleseed Justice Center. He has relocated to South Carolina, but will continue to play an important role for us. We thank him for his continuing efforts and offer our congratulations.

\* Former PHADP board member, current Advisory Board member Gary Drinkard participated in a death penalty demonstration in Texas. He also delivered a speech to students at John Carroll High School.

\* Advisory Board member Dale Wisely joined Carla Crowder of EJI to discuss the death penalty and other issues at Pilgrim Church in Birmingham.

\* The Alabama Supreme Court set an execution date on January 21 2016 for Christopher Brooks, despite unresolved litigation over the constitutionality of Alabama's protocol.





## Merry Christmas!!!

"Our Criminal justice system is fallible. We know it, even though we don't like to admit it. It is fallible despite the best efforts of most within it to do justice. And this fallibility is, at the end of the day, the most compelling, persuasive, and winning argument against a death penalty."  
--Eliot Spitzer

"The death penalty issue is obviously a divisive one, but whether one is for or against , you can not deny the basic illogic - if we know the system is flawed, if we know there are innocent people on death row, then until the system is reformed, should we not abandon the death penalty to protect those who are innocent?"  
--Richard Lagravenese

"My objection to the death penalty is based on the idea that this is a democracy, and in a democracy the government is me and if the government kills someone, then I'm killingsomeone."  
--Steve Earle

"The death penalty is ineffective as a deterrent, and the appeals process is expensive and cruel to the surviving family members."  
--Martin O'Malley

"The death penalty is discriminatory and does not do anything about crime."  
--Bobby Scott

"I come from the state of Michigan. We were the first English - speaking government in the world to outlaw the death penalty, back in the 1840's. We have never had, as a state, the death penalty in Michigan. I was raised with that, and even Republicans in Michigan, nobody would even think of putting a measure on the ballot to have the death penalty."  
--Michael Moore

"You can't reconcile being pro-life on abortion and pro-death on the death penalty."  
--N.T. Wright

"No true believer could be intolerant or a persecutor. If I were a magistrate and the law carried the death penalty against atheists, I would begin by sending to the stake whoever denounced another."  
--Jean Jacques Rousseau

"He Told You"

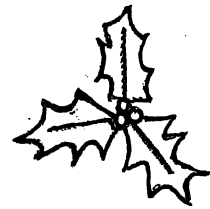
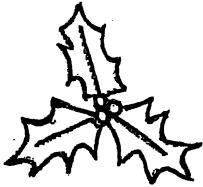
Season's Greetings and Blessings to you all.

My name is Pete and I was honored and shaken at the same time, when I was asked to write a Christmas article for Project Hope, because I really don't have that much to write about. Smile!

At a time in the year when there should be so much love, joy and peace being expressed through us as a people and nation, there is only hatred, confusion, sadness, worries and fears which are brought on by wars, religion, race and politics. And please don't get me started with that "Political Correctness" mess. Smile! Which should have been practiced at least a hundred and fifty years ago. Smile! God is good all the time, all the time God is good.

I love what Jesus is quoted as saying in St. John 14, "and now I have told you before it comes to pass that when it is come to pass you might believe. Peace, I leave with you. My peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, will I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. In the world you shall have trials and temptations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Earl "Pete" McGahee  
H-18



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Chaos

No peace... In our world today oh most ruthless one, you rule the day! You've turned bright humanity's helping ideas into selfish and ruthless ideals, which has the world on war's edge, all because we can't seem to take our eyes off "being right" when despite all we know and believe shows us different opinions or ideals or beliefs should ever weigh in on the basic respect and love and understanding and sharing of one's self!

Most, if not all, of the world's hero figures fought and died trying to open our hearts to peace. Our treatment of people shouldn't be based on skin color or station! And guess what?

We all make mistakes! Whether it's by choice or force, the bottom line is, we all make mistakes, yet we want everyone and everything to be perfect but making exceptions for our own mistakes.

We can't fix what we won't face, so I pray you all, we all enter the New Year forgiving, and begin your new journey healing in the New Year and stop seeing other's as your demons and prayerfully face your own!

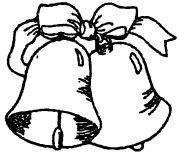
Have a happy and peaceful holidays and keep the planet in your prayers...

May the Heart of God be seen in Live and Living Color.

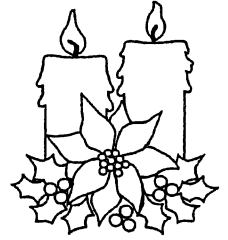
Prayerfully,  
ORACLE

# A Christian Perspective

Produced By  
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty



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Hello friends and loved ones,

It is that time of year again... I call it my bittersweet time of year. I love the holidays, but not so much here. But the holiday spirit begins in your heart and not in your environment. It is kind of cool that you can end a year on a merry note, despite the hectic year you have experienced. But 2015 was special for me in alot of ways. Me and my brothers here on LifeRow came into the year expecting... Expecting God to "show up and show out". And he didn't disappoint. Our Church here was standing on First Corinthians 2:9 which states, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the head of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." So as we traveled into the year, what did we see? After 30 years on deathrow Anthony Ray Hinton was released a free man. What else? A month later William Ziegler was released after 15 years. George Martin was given a \$75,000 bond. Montez Spradley, after being on death row several years was freed. Several new trials were confirmed. God is good!

So, I came into this year very very hopeful. So hopeful that I have become a prisoner of hope. And yes that can seem too overwhelming at times... But God. The disappointments are many; the statistics are stacked against you... But God.

Merry  
Christmas

I have determined that I will remain a prisoner of Hope in the midst of what could be overwhelming hopelessness and focus on the promise that stands before me. I will not be defeated in 2016 by what is NOT happening, but Rejoice in what is. And I ask that you all stand with me, and PHADP as we move forward in Hope. So, with that said, allow me to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy Happy New Years. See ya in 2016.

Hopeful,

Anthony Tyson Z641  
Vice Chairman/PHADP  
N-17



Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People

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Daydreaming in the Slaughterhouse

Here we sit, in a waking nightmare. Surrounded by suffering and misery. Should we stop dreaming? Should we stop believing? Is there an answer to all of our prayers? I believe that there is light in all darkness. Redemption is possible for every soul, every death row inmate.

Some people tell me I am wrong. It is okay to have different beliefs, after all this is America. The threat of death only causes more hatred of the system. People need positive reinforcement to change. To want to change. That positive reinforcement is Hope. Hope is real. Not just an abstract thought. Every inch of my being hangs on to Hope. If I could give it away, I would. But it is something you have to believe in, have faith in. I can't do it for my friends on death row, but I can spread the message.

We need to stop this. This place is beyond cruel and unusual. Some simply can't take it. They throw in the towel, that is, commit suicide or drop their appeals. I'm blessed. I have a family in the freeworld and on death row. My family in the free-world can't be with me 24/7. That is where my family on death row comes in. Every time I was on the edge of destruction, they pulled me back. Not out of malice but out of love, and because they care. I wish everyone on death row had that. They have my love. No matter what anyone does or says, I love the guys on death row. They showed me how similar all people are. As it was written, all men are created equal.

When I was young, I believed in the values of this country. I still do. But people need to defend them and not cave in to the naysayers. There is still an American Dream. At least there is for this one American. They can kill me, but they cannot kill my dream. Someone will dream again, and again, and again. Borrowing from Melville in "Moby Dick", "Death row was my Harvard and my Yale. I've learned more about life here than I could have ever learned in a traditional University. It's been a long ride, and now I am ready for my dissertation. I hope it's coming, because I'm well prepared."



Although my education is complete, I'm not out of energy. Death row for now is my home. And the people here are my family. I will defend my home and my family. Not with violence, but with my pen and my mouth. Whoever is coming, let them come. Because I'm ready.

Dantes



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Restoration

From a Christian perspective the "justice" system, the "corrections" system as it is today operating in the USA is of the Anti-Christ.

The reason is simply this:

We want to kill those who kill, instead of casting the devil out of the possessed.

We medicate the mentally sick instead of casting out the devil.

Once you cast the devil out of a person, they are restored to their right mind. You then can open up the prison doors and set them free. They will become an asset to civility, and useful to help others.

Who wants to actually help those who've committed criminal sin? Will not get any votes, that's for sure.

We are trying to use natural means to deal with spiritual crisis. That's why our two systems of "justice" and "corrections" are an abysmal failure.

You cannot kill a murdering evil spirit by killing the person the evil spirit used to do his evil deed.

You cannot medicate an insane spirit out of the mentally ill that commit crimes. All medication does is make a person docile so the evil spirit cannot use them while medicated. But once the medication wears off, or the person stops taking it, the devils are able to use the person with full force to do their evil deeds.

From the Christian perspective, the only way to hurt the devils and help the human is to cast the devils out in the name of Jesus. The devils are forced to come out, then go into dry places to wander, having no rest, and no one they can use to do their evil. Those set free of the devil will be restored to their right mind. They'll be normal, ready to live among us as if they never committed a crime.

Who really wants that?

A Christian Perspective  
Greg

Fighting the Good Fight

Greetings Readers,

Well it's been a long time since I've written anything, but I wanted to share with you how this year has been for me. Back on Feb. 6th, my dad lost his fight with lung cancer, he put up a long, but good tough fight though. He was told back in early 2012 that it was stage 4 and that he only had months to live, but he fought and held on for 3 years. I took the loss rather hard. I looked up to my Pops. Admired his toughness. I must say that he has been a big inspiration to me. His determination to live has helped me to not give up.

Just last week (Oct. 23), I was shot down by the Alabama Supreme Court and am now on my way to the next level of appeals. This was a huge let down to me and my family. We had big hopes of getting a new trial, the issue we filed was a major violation of my rights and we just knew we would get relief from that issue but they obviously seen otherwise.(expected) It's been hard on us but we are holding on. You see, I've got so much love and support from my wife and mother. The fact that they stay strong and stay supporting me, and the inspiration I've taken from my dad. There is no way I will ever quit my fight. And not to mention the fact God never has or never will give up on me. So how can I give up? I can't, and won't. So with this said, I know I will have a Holiday Season filled with faith, hope and love. "Plenty of Love" I pray you all will have the same.

Merry Christmas to you all! Sincerely, with Love,

David Wiggins  
N-20 / Z-760

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Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree

"Lite Mix 99.9, your Christmas station." You have to imagine that in a radio announcer's voice. I wonder how many times I will hear that station identification between now and New Year's Day? I likes me some Christmas music... well in moderation, right? How many times can you hit that falsetto "Christmas time is here" before your voice cracks like it did in ninth grade? me, bout seven...

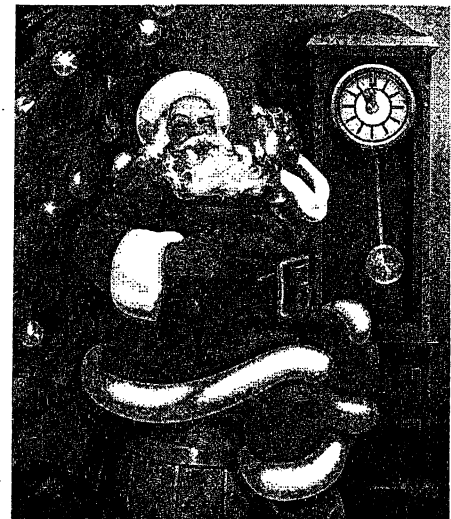
So who has all their shopping done? or better yet, all the gifts wrapped? I'm sure there are some of you who are done and even more who are avoiding eye contact... to each his own. I always liked the idea of getting it all done early and relaxing on Christmas Eve, but I usually wound up with plenty of last minute shopping, wrapping, or cooking to do, which is rewarding in its own way...right? Must've been something I liked about it, I did it every year.

However you do Christmas, let it be full of peace, joy, love, and hope. And maybe a little moderation too...

Bart Johnson  
Sec./Treas.  
F-18 / Z-778

Clocking In

In the clutch of time,  
 looking for a crutch from time,  
 to help me walk this path,  
 which is being eaten by lines,  
 cracks and potholes,  
 and mouths full of sewage grime.  
 Lusting,  
 having problems trusting,  
 both God and man,  
 double-dutching the line,  
 seeing a part of me,  
 I can't define.  
 Time,  
 the one thing we can't erase,  
 but if that miracle ever comes,  
 while I run this endless race  
 I'll remind myself,  
 you're the brother of a fearless champion,  
 now slow down the pace,  
 so other's can catch up,  
 and together embrace,  
 the fullness of God's grace,  
 through time I push on...



Omen  
 AKA  
 Tony Barksdale  
 Z-611/F-24



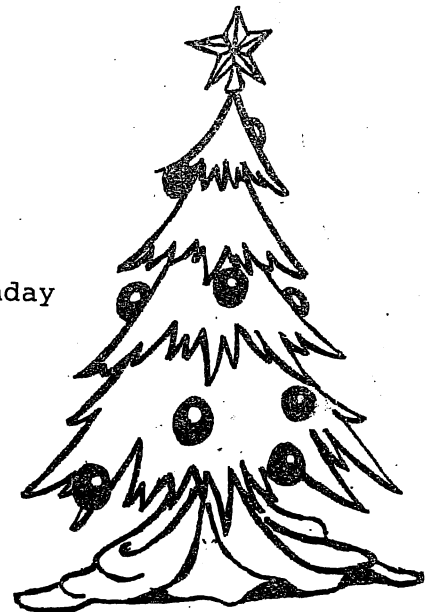
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His Christmas

The sight and sound of Christmas. The weight we put on from alot of good food, family and friendship. Why does this holiday only come once a year. Well, maybe it is best. So people can prepare themself. For all that food. But the real "Reason" for Christmas is remembering Jesus' birthday and what He did for all of us.

His blood washed our sin away. I give thanks to Him more than once a day. So let's not forget the real reason for the holiday.

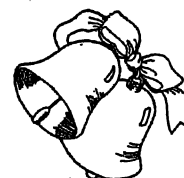
Ron K.  
 F-9



Happy Holidays!

The holidays are upon us. Another year of highs and lows. Yet we are grateful for the things we have. What this time of year means to me is kind of depressing, so I won't go through that with you the reader. I will share this with you, look around at your friends, family, children, tell them you love them. There is not enough love being shared these days. Christmas is a time to share, give, show love in some form. Be thankful for what you have and not that which you don't. The spirit of the Holiday is that of gift giving, so give a gift to the less fortunate, words, food, clothing, whatever, give it with love and a smile. It will go a long way. No matter what religion, or how you celebrate the birth of Christ, Happy Holidays to you all.

Thank You,  
Marcus Williams  
Coordinator  
G-8



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Where Does Your Strength Lie?

Hello my brothers and sisters, long time no talk. I want to wish all of my brothers and sisters a Merry Christmas and a safe New Year. A lot of times our strength depends on our circumstances and not what we believe, Nehemiah 8:10 says the joy of the Lord is our strength, but if we get a good parking space, or if we get the job promotion, if everything goes perfect in our household, if we had a bigger house, or a bigger car, or in my case if everything in here goes my way, but those are only temporary strength. Our real strength comes from the Lord. Daniel's strength was in the Lord when he was in the burning fiery furnace. David's strength was in the Lord when he defeated Goliath. Saul's strength was in the Lord when he was in the shipwreck. All of these brothers did not have perfect circumstances, yet they never complained and they never gave up. When the joy of the Lord is your strength, your circumstances don't shake you or hinder you. Daniel, David, and Saul believed the Lord for their strength and we all know the results. Keep believing the Lord for your strength in all your circumstances, He will see you through.

Jimmy Davis Jr.

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Companions of Compassion

Sometimes through the microscope or one-way-glass, sight is skewed. People morph into case files and research projects by those who examine them: their personalities forgotten, their humanity ignored. Human compassion is thrown to the bottom of the pile, collecting dust.

It is said that small, scattered moments define one, shape one. For me, there was a phone call. An unfamiliar, crackled voice brought more clarity to my values than any other service I've ever pledged.

Since sending a measly dose of my pocket money to an anti death penalty organization over a decade ago, I have become a sort of distant niece to eight of the guys on Alabama's death row. By no means do I believe that each one is innocent; they are there because they made wrongful choices, but nevertheless they hold a special place in my heart. Through my grandmother, who heads the anti death penalty organization, the guys have followed my sports and academic career continuously—bringing a little piece of the world to their 10x10 cells. From receiving handmade cards on my birthday to congratulatory messages after achievements, their capability to love had astounded me; I am their family.

Until this summer I had no gauge on what they were like. That changed when my grandmother set up a phone call and each name and story morphed into an individual with interests and talents. Looking back, I am ashamed that their caring surprised me. Mistakes do not consume a person's goodness like cancerous tumors. People seem to forget that when they have no emotional attachment to a situation. / forgot that. Floored by the way their voices radiated a glow of excitement or purpose as each conversation progressed, I had no idea how domestic banter can lift a person's spirit. Touched by the one-on-one relations I created on the phone, I realized the interconnection between healing and compassion. Even if just for a few minutes, I healed their loneliness. I served as a trickle of light, acknowledging their humanity. Everyone strives for an identity, a place to belong. By minimalizing their identity to a generalization—convict, cancerous, HIV positive—one has disabled them from truly healing.

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