

# On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



Vol. 20 Issue I  
Jan. - Mar. 2016



## HOPE

Over the years many friends have encouraged us not to give up hope and so we thought it was about time to take a closer look at what hope is and what it is not to better understand what they meant.

Often we use words rather glibly and without much thought and the word hope is no exception. We "hope" that you have a nice day; we "hope" that the rain will stop; we "hope" that there will be chicken for supper. One could fill this page with our hopes which require nothing from us except such qualities as optimism and wishful thinking. So is that what our friends had in mind when they asked us not to lose hope? Did they want us to just passively sit there, hoping for better days? And is that what our founders had in mind when they chose our name, and which among ourselves we so often abbreviate to simply Hope?

A rhetorical question because we all know the answer to this. Yes, it would be easy to just sit in our cells or on the outside, at our computer, and just hope for change, or would it? Our founders, our friends and we as an organization know that this is not true. We know that hope is not a passive word but an action word. We know that there can be a state of mind called the dark night of hope, which nevertheless calls for action on our part. We know that hope at its best is much more than just a feeling, although it is that too, a feeling, an awareness of a desired goal which appears to be beyond reason, and which prompts us to work to make it a reality, even if not in our own lifetime.

I cannot think of a better example of the words "even if not in our own lifetime" than the men I work with and have worked with over the years. All exemplify this statement by what they do and several have said this to me in so many words. And so Hope is not a feel good, wishful thinking kind of virtue but an active belief that the future can be better, with "active" being the key word.

Our friends were right to encourage us not to give up hope, no matter what, and I thank all of our supporters and most of all my family on death row at Holman Prison for teaching me again and again the action oriented reality of Hope. Let us all keep Hope alive!

Esther

**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

Greetings from the Editor's Desk:

Well, they say all good things come to an end, and on January 21, 2016 the State of Alabama ended a two year run sans executions by killing Chris Brooks. He is missed by a myriad of friends and family, on the row and off. And the State is reeling from the bad publicity that it has received for it's administration of law and order throughout the State. From Dothan where police officers plant drugs, Birmingham where an unarmed black teen was shot down, to Gadsden and Huntsville where DA's began capital trials while the spectre of a recent SCOTUS ruling in the Hurst case out of Florida could cause the cases to be overturned on appeal.

The Alabama Senate has decided to take on the issue of innocents in prison and on death row by establishing Senate Bill 237, which is a bi-partisan bill that would create an Innocence Commission, which could review cases and file subsequent referrals to State courts for proper adjudication. The members of the Commission would be made up of a Circuit Court Judge, a DA, a criminal defense attorney, a victim's advocate, one Sheriff, one unaffiliated member of the general public who is not an attorney and is not an officer or employee of the Judicial branch, one member to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and one member to be appointed by the Speaker of the House. Each member would serve three years. The Commission shall report to the Chairs of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees. Section 12 of this bill reads "There shall be a moratorium on all executions in the State of Alabama until June 1, 2017." So if this bill passes as is, then we should have another year sans executions. And any innocents on death row may have the chance to be heard on there claims of factual innocence. This is definitely a bill that merits attention. Also, Senate bills 117, 152, 153, 154, and 155 all deal with death penalty issues and all were submitted by Senator Hank Sanders of Selma, Alabama.

There is reason for Hope. As a former Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court noted recently that the death penalty will end in 3 to 6 years. Poe Francis again spoke out against the death and will be holding an international forum on Capital punishment in Rome. And we may get a Supreme Court Justice who may sway the balance against state sanctioned murder and it's proponents for good. Keep us in your thoughts and prayers. Now is not a time to give up. Now is a time to rally to Hope.

Ronald Smith Jr.

H1-6a/Z-586

EXECUTION ALERT! VERNON MADISON, MAY 12<sup>TH</sup> 2016, PLEASE ACT!

ALABAMA NEWS  
2016 1st QTR

\* The state of Alabama executed Christopher Brooks on Jan 21. we mourn the loss of a friend. We would like to thank his lawyers for their dedication and efforts right up to the end. We also thank those of you who called, wrote, e-mailed, posted, and prayed. Thank you for being The Other Voice!

\* We are pleased to announce that Mr. Donald Blocker has graciously accepted the title of Spiritual Advisor for our organization. So many of us at Holman owe him so much for his unwavering and faithful dedication.

\* We are sponsoring an Essay Contest for 11th and 12th grade students in Alabama. The topic is: "Why shouldn't the state have the death penalty?" The prize for first place is \$150.00, \$75.00 for second place, and \$25.00 for third place. We look forward to the students giving this issue some serious thought.

\* We were pleased with the 8 - 1 ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in the Hurst case. Florida's death penalty system was found to be unconstitutional. Alabama shares that system, but the question remains how it will affect current death row inmates but for now we refuse to be anything but positive, and hopeful.

\* We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to the National Association of Social Workers-Alabama Chapter for establishing a partnership with PHADP. At their Annual Advocacy Day we were given the opportunity to contribute information about the history of the death penalty, how we must make our voices heard, and ways to become involved. PHADP will also have an exhibit at their 2016 State Conference. Other Advocacy Day Issues include: Voting Rights, "Ban the Box," Pay Day/Title Loan reform, and Youth Tobacco Prevention.

\* A special thanks to our Vice Chairman Anthony Tyson for reaching out to the men who are out of appeals. Addressing issues from recent court rulings and emphasizing the importance of staying informed about one's case!

\* Our Executive Director, Esther Brown, attended the NAACP Executive Leadership Retreat and Quarterly Meeting. In her role as Death Penalty Moratorium Chair she gave the quarterly report and presented updates on developments in our state.

\* Our Executive Director also attended and presented at the SOS retreat and the Alabama New South Coalition annual convention. We appreciate the many organizations which stand with us.

BLOODY HANDS ALABAMA

Sung to Lynard Skynards "Sweet Home Alabama"

Criminal courts keep on churning  
Carry me away from my kin  
Singing songs about blind justice  
Lost in bama once again  
And i think its a sin, yeah

Well, i heard Mr. Tyson rant about it  
Well, i heard ole Bill throw'n down  
Well i hope Bill Tyson will remember  
Kill'n a man don't work anyhow

Bloody hands Alabama  
Where the skies are dark and grey  
Bloody hands Alabama  
Where no man gets a stay

In Birmingham Riley's the gov'nor  
We file petitions till we're blue  
Troy King, his puppet is a killer  
Does your conscience bother you?  
Tell the truth

Bloody hands Alabama  
Where the skies are dark and grey  
Bloody hands Alabama  
Where no man gets a stay  
Here i go to the slammer

Now Muscle Shoals a bunch of racists  
They're well known to rig a jury  
Batson don't get em off so much  
They picked me up and put me on deathrow  
Now they com'n for you

Bloody hands Alabama  
Where the skies are dark and grey  
Bloody hands Alabama  
Where no man gets a stay

Bloody hands Alabama  
A broken home without hope  
Where the skies are dark and grey  
And the gov'nor gives no play  
Bloody hands Alabama  
Yellow Mama  
Babe, i've been taken from you  
EJI, yeah Montgomery's got the answer



UNTITLED

In the wake of the death of Scalia, United States Supreme Court Justice, Congress vows to not even consider the President's nominee replacement for Antonin Scalia.

According to the Constitution, the President is obligated to nominate someone who he finds to be qualified to fill the vacancy of any Federal Justice Seat...

According to the Constitution, Congress is obligated to hold a hearing and to consider the President's nominee...

Instead, Congress vows not to even consider the President's nominee. How disrespectful. How could Congress reasonably expect for the citizens of this nation to abide by the laws that they pass, when they won't abide by them themselves.

People in today's society choose to be blinded by their representative's colorful promises. When in actuality it's not about representation of the people, but power...and greed.

Randy Lewis  
Z-741 O-19  
T.V.O.A.I.M.

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UNREPORTED

The News is where we the people are to get our daily source of information. The job of the News is to report on all stories no matter what they are, but lately there has been a story that was not reported. This story was never aired on any of the News channels in Alabama. A story of the police, their chief, and the DA. Where they all falsified reports and evidence to lock up half of their black community. The question is why is the News not reporting on this news, are they in on it to? Here at PHADP when we find the truth we don't leave anything unreported.

An Angel in the Shadows

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Alabama (Un-) just being Alabama

There are three States (Florida, Delaware and Alabama) in which a judge can override a jury, thus making he/she the ultimate decider. Well, the U.S. Supreme Court has said NO!(Finally) That such a scheme is unconstitutional. A jury's decision should not just be treated as a mere recommendation. However, one of these States is not like the others. Following the ruling in the Hurst case(out of Florida) two of the three States mentioned have begun reconstruction projects to "fix" their broken and unconstitutional death penalty schemes, and one of the States remains in denial and as defiant as ever. That's right, Alabama!! Alabama seems to always have to be first in all the wrong things. The powers that be, seem to revel in it and the ones that always foot the bill for their denials and defiance are the tax payers. The powers that be in Alabama, seem to think that the highest court in the land's rulings are just recommendations. So, even

after the Hurst ruling, they continue to press forward with capital cases. All the while telling the public that, the Hurst ruling does not apply to Alabama, because the death penalty scheme in Alabama has been challenged before, and not ruled unconstitutional. What they aren't telling the public is that those challenges were prior to the Hurst ruling. They are telling the public that the Hurst ruling won't effect Alabama because the sentencing schemes in Florida and Alabama differ. Here is where a little Alabamian is needed to state the obvious...hogwash boulderdash and poppy cock!

In the case(Harris v. Alabama) which the State tries to prove it's point, that the Florida and Alabama schemes differ, the Alabama Criminal Court of Appeals itself states plainly that, "the Alabama death penalty sentencing scheme is based on Florida sentencing scheme." Justices in the Hurst ruling also acknowledge that Alabama's scheme is based off of Florida's. Everyone seems to be acknowledging that fact, but the powers that be in the State of Alabama. Then again, they wouldn't be Alabama, if they did. Being the leader in all the wrong things is just what Alabama does! So, the State of Alabama, in it's usual acts of defiance is once again about to put a huge burden on the tax payers. Sooner or later, justice (The Justices) are going to come acalling and the overzealous deathseekers will have to pay the toll for continuing to stand defiant in support of their unconstitutional death penalty scheme.

Three states were addressed in the Hurst ruling...Florida, Delaware annnd ALABAMA!!

Fighting,  
Maximus Strong

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Remembering the Stanford Speech- The Other America 1967

Almost 50 years ago, a man from the South went out West to discuss "The Other America" as he called it. What I am going to do is parallel those times to the issues of today. It bares to remind each person that still to this day there are two Americas. Not so much black and white but race is the driving force. Today is more about the haves and have nots. I say that because of recent events and ongoing problems with sleight of hand racism. Racism without appearing racist. Laws enforced more harshly against one race than the white race. Now I want to clarify, I am open-minded but not naive. I'm not against white people, nor do I want my message perceived as such. I'm for educating the public and that means all of you. White, black, hispanic, asian, indian and arabs. Everyone. I want everyone to look into themselves, look at each situation that faces us today and question if the powers that be are doing what needs to be done to stop this institutional method of thinking and inequality. You have an opportunity in the coming months to show that this country is not what it appears to be. Starting with voting. I don't endorse either party, but I don't endorse the Donald Trump way of thinking. That thinking and his rhetoric is setting this country back decades. The good coming from him is that he is telling us the behind closed doors thinking of white men in this country. Listen people, just listen. Riots

and violence is the language of the unheard. In the poverty stricken areas of this country, schools are inadequate, crime is high, and economic promise is non-existent.

Talking about two Americas, one rich, one poor. In each you have black and white, the difference being those blacks are still looked upon as criminals, thugs, drug dealers or any other word you can think of to describe beneath and not superior. There is still the attitude of "they don't belong" in certain parts of society. But instead of building schools, they are building prisons. Instead of hiring and training qualified teachers, they are training uneducated prison guards to watch over uneducated prisoners. I point this out because, if you look at who is in State's Prisons across this country you'll see that the majority of those incarcerated are more than likely black and brown. Then look at the population make up of the country and you'll see there is no way there should be more people of color incarcerated than white. It just don't make sense.

Marcus Williams  
Z-656/G-8  
Coordinator

FOUND IT!

As we roll on into 2016 we send a big thank you to our supporters. Whether through a donation, signing a petition, organizing a rally or attending a vigil, contacting government officials, or however you bring the message to your community, know that your support means a great deal to us. We find encouragement in what you are doing to end capital punishment.

Also to the organizations and individuals within these organizations that advocate on our behalf, we thank you for stepping up and taking a stand with us, and in some cases allowing us to stand with you.

Friends, we can only do so much alone, but our cumulative efforts can move mountains. When we see the size of the mountain ahead of us it is reassuring to know that our faithful supporters are there, ready and willing to put their collective backs into it.

Now some actual substance, the "meat and potatoes" if you will. In January Florida's death penalty was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. It will take time, and we patiently wait while the ramifications of this case are made clear.

The National Registry of Exonerations released their report with the number of exonerations last year: 149. Just to briefly summarize, over 50 of those were "convicted" of murder. with 40% coerced to falsely confess or plead guilty. The average time in prison: 14 years. Somehow these exonerations aren't newsworthy events anymore...wow.

Missouri joined a long list of death penalty states claiming that it must cut corners and participate in shady drug deals in order to keep its death chamber up and running.

These are just a few examples of why what we do matters, and why your support is so important.

Bart Johnson  
F-18 Z778

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Our Student Representative, Petra Jackson, is going to Swaziland on her spring break with Swazi Kids, a non-governmental organization based in British Columbia, Canada dedicated to improving the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in Swaziland, a small landlocked country in southern Africa. Petra will be part of a group which will build a school. When the Board learned of this they voted to join her by making a donation and this was what she wrote:

To the Board:

I cannot express enough thanks for donating to my service trip. Your donation is going to change the lives of children for years to come. The school house that we are building is going to be a high school in a rural community which will allow these kids to get a solid education, leave to get a university degree, then come back and pay it forward. I'd like to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Love,

Petra



# A Christian Perspective

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Dear Family and Friends,

The sun has set on 2015...and now we head into a new year. 2015 gave us a lot to hang our hat on and to push forward in hope. It also opened the eyes of the injustice in this state and its criminal justice program. This year didn't start off to well for us, as we lost our brother Christopher Brooks. I had the opportunity of talking with his spiritual advisor afterwards, and I was comforted to hear that Chris kept the faith and stayed strong 'til the very end. We would like to thank the Federal Defenders Office for the strong effort they put forth for Chris toward the end of his appeal process. We too have to do better on our end in helping lawyers help us. So, we have started a new group here that we are calling the "Enlightenment" group. That will invite anyone out that wants to attend and get the updated legal information that we have at our disposal. We understand that we will not be able to help everyone, for one reason or another. But those that we can help we will help. The new bill that has been filed by Republican Senator Brew Baker out of Montgomery, has received bi-partisan support and we are hoping that this avenue opens more doors for those of us who have been proclaiming our innocence. We are currently dissecting this bill now to get a full

understanding before we crash our lawyers with questions. We think that this bill has come at the hand of a few errors committed by this state, that became nationally known over the last year. But however the case may be, we are looking forward to see how some of us will be able to benefit from it. So, as we continue stay focused and prayed up towards hope we would like to thank you all again, for all that you do, small and great...it is all appreciated. Until next time, Keep hope alive!

I remain,  
Anthony Tyson Z641  
Vice Chairman/PHADP  
N-17

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My Hope

The Lord is my light and my salvation.  
Whom shall I fear? The Lord is  
the strength of my life  
Of whom shall I be afraid?  
When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh.  
My enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.

Though an army may ebcamp against me.  
My heart shall not fear; though war may rise  
against me, in this I will be confident.

One thing I have desired of the Lord.  
That will I seek; That I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
All the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the Lord and  
to inquire in His temple.

For in this time of trouble, He shall hide me  
in His pavilion. In the secret place of His  
tabernacle, He shall me.  
He shall set me high upon a Rock.

\*\*\*\*\*

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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.*

### LOST HUMANITY!

What are some differences between animals and humans? Humans have the ability to communicate with talking while animals can't talk, you can teach some birds to speak! Humans show affection in a variety of ways from hugging to handshakes yet some animals have been known to exhibit this form of behavior. We humans are prone to sadness when a member of our family or community dies or is murdered, while animals, specifically elephants, have shown a sense of sadness following the death of a member of their herd. They are known to hang around the body for days and sometimes even gather the bones of the dead. What makes the human so humane?

The sudden death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia was a shock to almost all Americans. The man was viewed as a conservative legal giant. His scathing and often humorous dissents in some of the most controversial cases in America will be remembered for ages. Though I highly disagree with his stance on the way the Constitution works, I cannot applaud his death because love him or hate him he was a human. Our nation is in mourning for one of the most conservative and controversial figures to ever don the traditional garment of a Supreme Court Justice, R.I.P!

The brothers here at Holman have experienced a loss of a human the past month. Mr. Christopher Brooks, whom I grew to know while I have been here at the row. The Chris I knew was a guy who was very quiet and contrite at times, only speaking when spoken to, and toward the end of his life he found a grace and love that could only be classified as heavenly. He talked about the people that had come into his life towards the end that changed his life for the better. That change allowed him to face his murder. With the peace he found it gave him an understanding that it wasn't going to be the end of life, but only the beginning of life.

So when we ask ourselves the question of what makes us human some part of the answer has to be the way we respond to the death of another human. We were all created equals, yet we may not have all grown up in equal environments. Some of us were more blessed to come from a background where family values nurtured our God given gifts and talents, while some never had the opportunity to fully embrace our God given talents. Whether we are a Supreme Court Justice or An Alabama Deathrow inmate, we are all human and equal in the eyes of God.

I remain the Caring Christian,  
Jeffery Lee

In the days long past, man kind was barbaric. There was no law and we had little love for one another. As time moved forward mankind became civilized. Laws were put in place so we would not look so barbaric. We came to see that there was more to life than eating and having babies. We started creating things to make each other happy. they even put books together to govern us. Those were the laws I was talking about. History is a crazy thing. Things happened that some people say happened and some people say they didn't happen. All I know is the more civilized we are the more barbaric things seem.

Jesse Phillips  
G-9

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HUMMINGBIRD!

Hummingbird  
Look at you,  
a taint of green and blue,  
hovering in the air,  
tail feathers affair,  
your tiny wings,  
how they sing,  
beating hectically,  
so majestically,

I can see your true beauty,  
while you do your duty,  
collecting the nectar,  
over the course of a hectare,

In the gentle wind,  
I shall contend,  
And defend...  
...you from all predators,  
that includes collectors,  
because you are so fragile,  
floating there in the air, yet agile...

Christopher Hyde  
O-6

\*\*\*\*\*

***Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People***

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

I've heard it said that approximately 75% of the things we worry about never happen and at least 23% of the things we worry about are things we don't have control over anyway! God is in control! "Don't Worry, Be Happy!"

This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in each of our 365 days a year. Live one day at a time, forget about yesterday, and don't worry about tomorrow. Nothing can happen to us or for us without God! His mercies fail not -His favor is for life- His truth endures forever. He gives more grace than we deserve...

"When in doubt, He will work it out! Take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there!"

IF YOU'RE GOING TO WORRY, DON'T PRAY  
IF YOU'RE GOING TO PRAY, DON'T WORRY

The Artist

\*\*\*\*\*

UNTITLED

take me for who i am not what i am,  
for the way i am is not who you say i am,  
for if i am then you may say not,

because life is a trip to the ones that's not,

im not a fool just got foolish ways,  
judge me for the good and not my wicked ways  
only because you wanna say to me its ok  
but if not take me forwho i am and have a nice day.

The Realist

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"People who have come to know the joy of God do not deny the darkness, but they choose not to live in it. They claim that the light that shines in the darkness can be trusted more than the darkness itself and that a little bit of light can dispel a lot of darkness. They point each other to flashes of light here and there, and remind each other that they reveal the hidden but real presence of God. They discover that there are people who heal each other's wounds, forgive each other's offenses, share their possessions, foster the spirit of community, celebrate the gifts they have received, and live in constant anticipation of the full manifestation of God's glory."

---Henri J.M. Nouwen

HOW WILL THE DEATH OF SUPREME COURT JUSTICE  
AFFECT CAPITAL PUNISHMENT?

The Supreme Court sits on the highest hill of the land of law in America.

It is ruled by 9 distinct supreme stars that hover over every major social changing event in our society.

The Supreme Court is ruled by 9 important judges and it is severely damaged right now with only one swing voting judge, Kennedy. With 4 liberals and 3 conservative judges, it's a high possibility of a tie vote on life and death cases without the 9th judge.

The conservative republican party has threatened to block every replacement nominated by President Obama.

If this bully blocking strategy is pulled off, it could affect more than issues about gay rights violations, affirmative action cases and abortion. Innocent and wrongfully convicted men and women on death row could be legally murdered if they don't immediately replace this judge on the Supreme Court. It's highly possible that the same circuit court who denied a person a stay (a stay is a legal term basically saying this person shall not be executed right now because he or she has a constitutional issue that has or may have violated their rights to a fair review of their cases). The Supreme Court has overturned many lower court rulings in the past. It's possible and likely if the supreme court vote lands bottom up on a tie of 4 - 4, the same lower court who a condemned person appealed their case from will have the last say so. And that wouldn't be good or fair. You basically lose your right to appeal an unconstitutional right violation.

As a citizen of society and of the condemned, innocent, or wrongfully convicted, we look to the last hope with the Supreme Court to correct the injustices done, the erroneous decisions of the lower courts, who strive to be upright as the Supreme Court, but are not quite there yet. We can't rely on the lower court decisions to replace the Supreme Courts wisdom because of a 4 - 4 tie vote.

Take the case of Anthony Ray Hinton, the innocent man on death row in Alabama for 30 years. If the Supreme Court hadn't overturned his case, he would be on his way to be executed. Thanks to the Supreme Court he wasn't. We cannot afford to depend on the circuit courts to replace the Supreme Court by relying on their ruling if the Supreme Court vote falls on a tie of 4- 4.

They are our last hope, don't crush it!

Internal Exiler 33

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