

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



VOL. 20 ISSUE III
JUL. - SEPT. 2016

**Execute
Justice
Not
People**

THE TOWER OF BABEL

When we don't explore the deeper meaning of things we shortchange ourselves and others. The Tower of Babel? Sure we know that story. It is about how we came to speak so many different languages. And so those of us who think we speak the same language glibly tell each other such things like: *I know what you are talking about, or I know exactly where you are coming from.* To which I would reply: wrong, at best you can only guess!

Although I would be willing to concede that perhaps you are trying to understand where I am coming from, as we are all unique with our unique history and unique genes, it follows that we also speak and understand in our unique ways.

On an interpersonal level understanding this allows us to relate to each other in a respectful manner. Maybe it helps us not to so quickly dismiss what the other has to say, to listen more carefully and be humble enough to admit that each joy, each sorrow is experienced in a unique way and that although we want to understand and place ourselves in the other's shoes, we will never be able to do this fully because of that Tower of Babel.

If we accept that, it may help us to make some progress in the realm of ideologies, of which the death penalty is one. For many of us this is a very personal issue and listening and trying to hear what the others are saying can be very painful for us who have lost loved ones to the executioner, who are on death row and for all who know without equivocation that killing is evil whether by an individual or by the State. One could ask whether one should be interested in even trying to understand the language about the death penalty of people who are so obviously in the wrong? What is the point in listening to the babble (Tower of Babel) of people whose language is incomprehensible and hurtful at the same time? There is no point unless, unless...that by trying to understand the language of the executioner, the judge, the murder victim's family member, the man in the street, the politician and especially those who you have written off as never being able to reach, a door is opened by the sound of a syllable or word dimly remembered from the time before the Tower of Babel when we understood each other. Can we return to that time? I don't think so, but by respecting each other's uniqueness, our unique languages, maybe we can at least begin to do a better job at hearing each other over the babble which separates us, and hearing each other partially, begin to bring about change and dismantle the tower of Babel.

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**

Another summer is behind us and there is no drought and no execution dates set so I feel we are ahead of the game. Speaking of games with the end of the summer comes the advent of another football season. Confession time, I am a Penn State fan. Being a Penn State fan in prison in Alabama is interesting now that we don't play each other every year. Imagine sitting in a room or being a "captive" audience for jests, jibes and the rarest of all good game. I do have a Michigan Wolverine on the Board with me so things aren't always bad, unless it is the weekend of the Penn State vs. Michigan game then I am all alone again. And I get no respect.

Speaking of respect, a man I greatly respected died this summer. James "Bo" Cochran, a co-founder of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty, and a friend to this Board, died July 12th at the age of 73. Bo, lost over 19 years due to police and prosecutorial misconduct, until he was set free in 1997. Rest In Peace, my friend.

We also lost Joseph Hooks on August 13th, of natural causes, here at Holman. Our prayers go out to their families.

Esther is already set to do some traveling this fall. The Alabama Arise Annual meeting is September 10th, and we would love to have you join her. They will be voting to decide their priorities for the upcoming year and every vote counts. Contact Esther at the home office for details. Also, of special note to Montgomery residents and those close by Esther will be attending the New South Coalition meeting October 1st. Both groups are long time supporters and can use our support.

The debate on the death penalty continues amongst the general public. Polls show that fewer Americans support the death penalty today than a few years ago. California and Nebraska voters will have their say this fall as both States are putting it before the voters. Thurgood Marshall, one of the most renowned US Supreme Court Justices said, "The American people are largely unaware of the information critical to a judgement on the morality of the death penalty...if they were better informed they would consider it shocking, unjust, and

unacceptable." I believe the recent actions of the United States Supreme Court are opening peoples' eyes to the realities of the complex nature of capital punishment. As far as, this Christian is concerned, only God knows the time of our end and it is foolhardy for man to attempt to play God.

Thank you to all who have shown their support by mail, email, over the phone. Thank you for helping to "Keep Hope Alive." As for me I'll just keep trying to keep things positively real.

Ronald B. Smith Jr.
Z-586/H1-6a
Editor-"On Wings of Hope"
Chairman- PHADP

CELLS

Within the place where I live
The hungry air becomes a vacuum
Feeding insatiably on my marrow.
Over the shell there's a colorful cover
That has begun drying-out and is starting
To flake. The crusty old walls are synonymous
With the shedding of skin housing
Brittle bones hidden beneath aging flesh.

As soulful layers fall to the ground
There's a rejoicing at reconnecting with
Ancient and contemporary kin who once tarried
Here. Witness now, in clarity's bell-jar, the
Contest between evolving flesh and spirit,
And the sacred rites, which transform ashes to ashes
Dust to dust in the soul of cells.

Darrell B. Grayson

7.15.06

Darrell B. Grayson was the chairman of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty from 2000 until his execution in 2007. His poetry, which he described as "a contagion of insecurities" appeared in Axis of Logic, Birmingham Arts Journal, Right Hand Pointing, Wings of Hope, two chap books and elsewhere. Represented towards the end by the Innocence Project he was denied DNA testing which would have cleared him. We remember Darrell with gratitude and love.

Alabama News
2016 3rd Qtr

- * The 20th Annual Starvin' for Justice Fast and Vigil to abolish the death penalty took place in Washington D.c. June 29 - July 2. This event continues to grow each year, and we were proud to be co-sponsors this year. Obviously, we all wish we could've participated there in person!
- * The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 40 prominent Latino organizations, joined the growing, bipartisan list of groups calling for the end of the death penalty, noting that Latinos are "directly affected by its injustices"
- * The Democratic National Committee included abolition of the death penalty on their convention platform. This is a great step, and we hope support for abolition continues to grow in both major political parties.
- * 50 years after the tragic events of bloody Sunday a new organization has been created in Selma, AL. The Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth & Reconciliation. We certainly support their mission and their vision. We hope that you will too.
- * Steven Hall, a former death row inmate has been moved off of death row. He has been resentenced to life without parole because of the exclusion of black jurors from his jury. It is a well documented fact that black jurors are less likely to vote for death than white jurors.
- * In California the ballot this November will include Prop. 62, to repeal the death penalty, and Prop. 66, a counter-initiative backed by prosecutors to reduce the time between sentencing and execution by limiting appeals and putting a 5 year time limit on the state Supreme Court. If both measures pass, only the one with the most votes will become law.
- * The Attorney General has asked the Alabama Supreme Court to set an execution date for Tommy Arthur as soon as possible, despite the many legal and constitutional issues surrounding Alabama's death penalty.
- * The Delaware Supreme Court has ruled its death penalty unconstitutional due to the Hurst decision. The Attorney General in Delaware will not appeal the ruling, leaving Alabama as the only state with jury override.
- * The Board is saddened to announce the passing of not only a former Board member, but a friend to successive Boards upon his release from death row, Mr. James Willie "Bo" Cochran. Bo died on July 12th at the age of 73. He spent nearly 20 years on death row due to to police and prosecutor's lies. May the Good Lord receive him home.
- * The Board also is saddened to announce the death of our brother Joseph Hooks who died August 13th of natural causes.
- * The group Virgin United led by Richard Branson, of Virgin Records and Virgin Airlines fame, contacted our Executive

Alabama News Continued

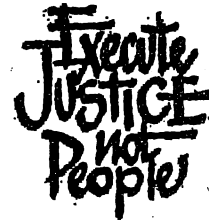
Director because "We are a leader in the fight against the death penalty", to set up a call to coordinate our participation in Virgin United's blitz for California and Nebraska. Both States have a public referendum this fall concerning the death penalty in those States.

* The Board has endorsed the Movement for Black Lives who along with fighting for racial equality on many different levels is advocating against the death penalty.

* October 1st should be placed on the calendar of Montgomery residents as the New South Coalition will be meeting.

Nonentity

Everyday,
I pray,
to hear someone say,
keep your head up my love,
it'll be okay,
so i pick up the phone,
to call home,
but I guess they can't feel,
I'm feeling all alone,
because once again,
I'm reminded by the dial tone,
that I'm no more,
than a festering sore,
O' nevermind,
well, I'm hurt to the core,
how is someone loved,
when they are so easily ignored?,
I feel like somebody,
with no body, no body, no body,
nobody for sure...



Oracle

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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.



James Willie "Bo" Cochran died July 12th at 73 years of age. In 1976 he was accused of killing a store clerk and dragging his body under a mobile home. He was found guilty of killing the clerk and was sentenced to death. In 1997, lawyer Richard Jaffee and his team proved him innocent, and the court released him. He lost 20 years of his life due to police and prosecutorial lies.

Mr. Cochran admitted to robbing the store but denied he killed the clerk. In reality, two young police officers who responded to the robbery, followed the clerk out of the store; they thought he was the robber, and one shot him. Realizing they had made a bad error, they panicked and moved the body under a mobile home and used a knife to dig out the bullet. Other officers arrived and discovered the body, and they later found Cochran nearby with a gun in his possession. They arrested him for the murder of the store clerk. One critical factor, the gun had not been fired.

Later, during the trial, the District Attorney who had a pattern of striking black jurors, struck all but one black juror. He felt that prospective black jurors "were anti-police, anti-establishment and should not be left on juries." Race was a factor in these strikes, "particularly where you had a white victim and a black defendant." On re-trial, thanks to Richard Jaffee and his team; Mr. Cochran was acquitted and released from death row.

Mr. Cochran lost 19 years of his life. He didn't see his daughters graduate from high school because of lying, killing police officers. He didn't get to see his daughters date, marry, and grow-up because of a lying, racists District Attorney. He didn't participate with his daughters positives and negative during their teen years because of an incompetent defense attorney. But, thanks to Mr. Jaffe and his team, Mr. Cochran lived 20 more years and truly touched a lot of lives with his forgiveness and redemption.

Knowing that some police will lie, some District Attorneys are racists and will lie also, and some defense attorneys are poorly qualified for capital cases, why do we still promote capital punishment in Alabama? Also, we must pay innocents that are imprisoned. It is totally unfair and criminal for Mr. Cochran to be wrongly imprisoned without payment. In fact, the police, the District Attorney, and the county should have paid him at least \$1.8 million dollars.

Have a great summer, and work hard to eliminate this fallacy in our state.

Sincerely,

Sam L. Sullins
Advisory Board Member

***Execute
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SETTING PEOPLE STRAIGHT

One might think that being on the side of the angels, (and aren't we all), would give us permission to call out our opponents in whatever manner felt good. By fair means or foul, right is with us! And so at times we go after people's private lives, attacking people rather than ideas, judging for all we are worth, and forgetting that people in glass houses should not throw stones. And yet we all live in glass houses, don't we?

It must be admitted that setting people straight does feel good. Not only are we the virtuous striking a blow for freedom, as the saying goes, but there is that nasty little part in us that understands that as another saying goes, that joy over someone else's loss is the purest form of joy. Naturally we would never admit to that part in us and after all, these people who we attack have hurt us or will potentially hurt us or what we hold dear, so are we not justified to feel that way? And don't politicians do it all the time, attack people rather than ideas?

And now we come to the question whether this setting straight, this self righteousness which fuels personal attacks is productive? I would argue that it is not. Many years ago while taking a course in Logic I learned about a group of fallacies used in arguing an issue which do not work. The fallacy that impressed me the most, so that I still remember it, is called the "ad hominem" argument. It is the argument where we attack the man, our opponent, rather than the idea. With so many valid reasons for abolition of the death penalty do we really have to be so darn self-righteous and reveal our feelings of impotence by setting people straight, especially when it has been proven to be counterproductive?

I hear you mumbling under your breath that what she is doing is exactly what she told us not to do, trying to set us straight. You are absolutely correct and I do it because I know that we can all do better in that department and that we will be more effective when we stick to ideas rather than wallowing in the mud of personal attacks and self-righteousness. Our case for abolition really is stronger than that and we are too!

Esther



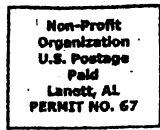
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Come Together

Aug. 5, 2016 The world came together to face each other in the Olympic games in Rio. The countries put aside their differences for the purpose of competition, but in the process they end up sharing each other's culture. I hope in the spirit of the Olympics that countries that see the death penalty as inhumane would share this with the American team. May the Spirit of the Olympics bring everyone together.

An Angel In the Shadows

A Christian Perspective

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Dear Family and Friends,

If you're reading this, then that means I made it through another HOT HUMID summer here at Holman. WOW! One night I woke up to turn my fan up and ended up breaking the nob because it was on as high as it would go. Usually our nights are bearable but there were a few nights where it didn't get below 90° and it was terrible. But God is good and I push on. Since the last time we have written to you all, we lost two brothers. One being a PHADP Founding Father "Bo" Cochran. He passed on to another life. We will always remember his passion and love for the Lord and his drive to see PHADP take off. Also, our Liferow brother Joseph Hooks lost his battle with cancer. Joe had been here awhile and was a very known handy man in fixing different things around the row. Those brothers will be missed and remembered.

In legal news, we see the Republicans were serious about not allowing President Obama appoint another Judge to the Supreme Court. But what is sad about this entire ordeal is that they would rather our courts be stagnant than to see things through. Power is a device that should be earned and not given. I fear what this country may become if we don't get this election right. And I'm not just directing that at the Judgeship situation. But as a leadership standpoint. Our Presidents are suppose to set an example for character in Our Country. This great country is Blessed to be a blessing.

That is why I have joined hands with some outside brothers to do better within our communities. We are starting a group called S.O.S.(Save Our Selves) which will target the youth that have looked up to the criminals of their communities. We want to clean up what we know we messed up. We started by collecting funds from the local guys to have a back to school drive and we are planning more things to help encourage young men to be better fathers

and leaders in their community. So, who better to set this example than those that set the bad example. S.O.S. believes that Black lives matter starts with us, not those that we may want to point a finger at. Because as an old saying goes, "when you point one finger, three are pointing at you". And I'm sure this may be an organization that PHADP and others will be able to support and encourage on their way. And with me being a silent member/founder of S.O.S. that helps to have a close eye on the sparrow. So, with all that said, I am at peace with that, we love you and appreciate you all.

Sincerely,
Anthony Tyson
Z-641/N-17a
Editor-"A Christian Perspective"
Vice Chairman-PHADP
Holman 3700
Atmore, Al. 36503

When Children Lie

Lying is the intentional supplying of false information. When a person says something that is untrue, that he actually believes to be true, he has made a mistake. In this case he may be misguided or uninformed, but he is not lying.

Fear or Power

A child who feels afraid or powerless may think that lying will gain him the approval of others or cause him to escape punishment. This is commonplace in homes where the parents are overly controlling and negative. The child gets no approval or affirmation from the family, and I, myself was a living witness that lying is perceived as the only escape from what I thought of as a prison. Immediately, we bring to mind the teen years questions about what, where, and with whom, are all subject to fabrication. But we should realize that a pattern of lying will have been well established before adolescence, if it is being used as an escape tactic, so we need to identify it in the earliest stages.

When a child is caught telling a lie, we should step back and try to determine what the child's goal is. If we identify the cause, we should be able to address those concerns, if any, and teach them alternative ways in an effort to avoid them. Developing a lifelong habit that will be difficult to control later.

Craig Newton
G-10

"What Is Really Going On?"

What is going on in my opinion with the death penalty. It is a proven fact that the death penalty is not being administered fairly, especially with Defense Counsel being paid what the State is paying. You would think that since you're defending a person's life they would be justly and fairly paid for the work that is needed to be done in these cases. Prosecutors are out to get a guilty verdict at all cost instead of seeking justice with that same zeal and passion. And then there are these elected judges that gain their seat by an election and not an appointment like the Federal judges. Why are we electing judges that do not follow the law or desires of the people (jurors). Jurors are peers of the community who vote in elections as well as trials. If you are gonna honor their vote at the polls and when it comes to guilt and innocence why not honor their vote when they choose life over death. I think these changes would make a big difference in how the courts would rule on our appeals if the starting point of it all was done fair. Juries need more instruction on how to sit on a Capital trials especially when it comes to DNA and eye witness testimony, as well as lay person testimonies. The courts are allowing and leaving it up to jurors to guess and speculate about the truth in these matters. All jury deliberations in Capital trials should be videotaped and held for an 11th hour appeal to see if jurors really weighed and reviewed the evidence as instructed by the judge. And why not add an appeal to the 11th hour appeals that would have judges review a recorded jury deliberation. This process should be a part of the fair trial, due process clause too. Because, not only do lawyers, D.A.'s and judges get it wrong but juries also. And the odds are already against the defendant by just sitting at the Defense table. Let's fix our system or just stop calling it fair!

BACK!

Thomas Lane 01-5a

The Unseen Political Put Away

My name is Clayton Shanklin and I was sent to death row from Walker County, by a jury override.(12 jurors voted for Life without Parole, 1 elected judge sentenced me to death) Yea, a political put away. And again you guessed it, it was an election year. So, the judge seized the perfect opportunity to send a power message to the community, especially since the nature of the case was black on white. So at first I had a paid lawyer that got disbarred a month before my trial. Then the judge appointed me the same lawyer that I had fired because he never had a capital case, without calling me back to court to seal his election. And once I was convicted the lawyer withdrew from my case because he stated that it was a conflict of

interest.

That is what put me on death row, the place where Alabama's Judicial System have painted a picture to society, that this is a place for human beings that are not fit to live. Because they say we are the worst of the worst, AKA Monsters. So they are patiently waiting to kill us, one by one. They want to strap us down in a chair and put a needle in our veins to overdose us with medicine that burns and causes us to suffocate, while an audience gets to watch through glass as you go in and out of consciousness, until you take your last breath. And only then do they feel as though justice has been done.

But we are the monsters? Oh my God!

Clayton Shanklin
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Three Pointing Back

I attend several classes that focus on the law, as it pertains to capital punishment, as well as the abolition of the death penalty, and they are about 85% African American. On occasion, I have the opportunity to discuss current events with some of the guys here on death row. With all of the tragic events that have taken place over the past few years, many being hate crimes and racial injustice, a lot of the conversations lead to strong opinions about black murder victims. And then I stumbled across the statistics.

In this state, Alabama, the population is 70% white, 27% black, and 3% other minority races. But what's even more astonishing about this is that 50% of the murder victims are black. So statistically, half of the guys I talk to about all the black people being killed are in here for killing a black person! It's mind-boggling how so many of us who have been unjustly, and hypocritically judged by society can turn right around and do the exact same thing.

By no means am I saying that we should not feel negatively about racially motivated murder and violence, nor am I saying that we shouldn't speak out against it. Black lives matter. But the point I'm trying to make is that I hope each and every one of us have taken the time to look at ourselves and judge our past decisions before pointing our fingers. This is not only about murder, this is about judging others and hypocrisy in general. So, the next time you are ready to talk about what someone did or didn't do right, the next time you are ready to judge someone else, remember the old saying: When you point your finger at someone, remember that there are three pointing right back.

Castro

Foundation

I saw a Dr. Scholl's commercial that said you needed a good foundation to stand on. This is true for way more than just selling insoles. Matthew 7 describes following the teachings of Jesus and being as a wise man whose house is built on the rock. But to ignore his teachings would be like having a foundation of sand easily swept away by the rain. Ephesians 2 adds that Christ Jesus Himself is the cornerstone. So it is very important to have a spiritual foundation that can withstand the storms that may come our way. If you've ever tried to live your life on unsteady ground, no matter how nimble and sure-footed you think you are, there will be times when it is a struggle just to keep your feet.

We've mentioned already in this newsletter about the Delaware Supreme Court ruling their death penalty unconstitutional, and in case you haven't read the ruling let me share a little bit of what Delaware Supreme Court Chief Justice Strine had to say about the foundation of not only their death penalty law, but capital punishment in general. He says that in the early years of our country no one was sent to the gallows without first having a jury decide that they should. That key protection of a jury of our peers is (or was) a cornerstone of law. After the Furman decision to strike down death penalty cases came the Gregg decision, which seems to have allowed states to eliminate this foundation. This has resulted in what he calls "legal arguments, and even judicial opinions, built on non-bearing foundations." He also describes how "our nation's Supreme Court is increasingly called on to build out the interior of an edifice entirely of its own construction." Which leaves lawmakers guessing "what designs will prove durable and formidable." He describes Hurst as "restoring something basic that had been lost."

In reference to the Supreme Court previous rejection of Sixth Amendment violations in Spaziano and Hildwin, he saw it as "a gruel too thin to sustain the failure to recognize the vital importance of the jury's role in the capital sentencing process." And leads us to the conclusion that Hurst does in fact mean what it says. He see's Hurst's wording "to be the latest spade work in the judicial unearthing of an unattractive by product of a lengthy period of judicial innovation." Hopefully undermining this false foundation and getting us back on solid ground.

This thoughtful and broad analysis should be an example for everyone to not lose sight of the big picture while sorting out the details. Keeping the foundation intact, while building something that not only will stand the test of time, but also something to be proud of.

Bart Johnson
F-18 / Z-778

JUSTICE

Justice is fairness, legality, equity, legitimacy, honesty, truth, impartiality, honor, reasonableness, and just do what is right. These are words that should be applied all the time to every capital punishment case. Why don't we apply this word to every capital case?

A police officer kills a man, and to make sure he is not caught, he digs out the bullet and throws it away. He lies during the trial, and never says a word to keep the man from being found guilty. JUSTICE? I think not. Why do we as an intelligent, Christian state accept this?

An appointed defense attorney comes to a capital trial drunk and goes to sleep, and hears nothing. The judge sees this and does nothing. Why? Is this justice? Of course not, but it has happened. The defendant was found guilty and sentenced to death.

A prosecutor strikes all the African-Americans from the jury because they are likely to find the black defendant not guilty. JUSTICE?

An elected judge who can over-ride a jury's verdict is a profound racist. When a jury recommends life without parole for a black defendant, the racist judge over-rides the verdict and changes it to the death penalty. JUSTICE?

A prosecutor seeks out deals to win their case. For example, a person who was with the defendant during the alleged killing is offered a shorter sentence if he will lie and say he saw the defendant kill the victim. JUSTICE?

Eyewitness misidentification is one of the worst problems we have in our court system. The police encourage eyewitnesses to identify a specific person. They use hints, suggestions of guilt and even set-up a skewed line-up to sway a witness in the direction of a person they want found guilty. JUSTICE?

In the 2017 legislative session, how are we going to eliminate injustice and replace it with justice? As a Christian state, we must change.

Sam L Sullins, Advisory Board Member

Sam L. Sullins writes weekly letters to Senator Cam Ward, Senate Judiciary Committee Chair

