

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

# On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



Vol. 21 Issue I  
Jan.-Mar. 2017

Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People

## PASSING THE TEST

Benjamin Franklin who coined the phrase that "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes" forgot something else that is certain: tests! Not a single day goes by when we are not confronted with some kind of test, small though it may be, but a test nevertheless.

The same holds true for a country, a state as well as for an organization. Some tests are harder than others but there is no doubt that they are part of life and as we can't avoid them we might as well put some effort into acing them so that they don't break us.

When we take a test in school we are more likely to do well if we have done our homework and prepared ourselves. Tests for an organization are no different. Cramming at the last minute does not make up for the work we should have been doing right along, in fact word has it that last minute cramming can be disastrous.

The test for our organization came on 12.8.16 with the botched murder/execution of our chairman Ronald B Smith. Ron was not our first chairman or Board member to be executed and the question how can one ever be prepared for this kind of test is a valid one.

I mentioned the importance of preparation for tests and in our case the preparation consists of years of working together as a team or as we like to say as a family. That is crucial and keeps us from being broken by this ugly and devastating test. Instead what happens is that we become even closer, putting aside all differences while doing our best to adjust to our new roles in new positions. The challenge is to make sure we don't drop the ball while supporting each other. And yes, we passed the test! What do you think? Could our country undergoing its own testing right now perhaps learn from us!

Esther

**Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People**

**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

The United States Supreme Court

Where can justice be found in the United States of America? Some would say that the highest court in the land presides over the last vestiges of justice in the free world. However, how just are the judges of the U.S. Supreme Court? Are they not tainted by the politics of the political parties and Presidents who place them into office? Conservative judges are usually placed into office by conservative presidents, while liberal judges are placed into office by liberal presidents. Even now, Chief Justice Rehnquist of the Supreme Court says he will not retire until a Republican president is in office. Not only does this assure the placement of another conservative justice on the bench, but also helps to ensure that another conservative justice will represent the bench as chief justice.

Lately, the court's reputation has been marred by reports of in fighting amongst the justices. Issues such as states' rights, school prayer, Miranda rights, and grandparent's rights have re-entered the U.S. Supreme Court only to be passed by the narrowest of margins. And currently the court is being asked to step into the election results. They even handed down a clarification ruling in the midst of hearing an appeal on search and seizure laws. And after the presidential election has been decided, the next president will get to appoint at least two justices, including the chief justice. How will that have changed the current conservative climate within the U.S. Supreme Court? How will that effect such issues as the death penalty and abortion, which are expected to once again be tested and heard before the high court? How will it effect the everyday lives of the citizens of the United States in the future?

The past has shown that rulings passed by liberal justices can be reheard and overturned by conservatively minded judges. And vice-versa. But considering the current climate of in-fighting and politically minded justices such as Chief Justice Rehnquist, how can the U.S. Supreme Court be thought of as just? How can strife and political bias be said to inspire confidence in the highest court in the land? While not many questions can be

answered without a full review of the court, many insiders think the court should be more insulated from political pressures and favor paying. Though the way justices are appointed and the "dog and pony show" that is the confirmation process do not lend much legitimacy to the appearance of justice within the U.S. Supreme Court. And in the end, the system only becomes more enmeshed and mired in the business that is politics.

Ronald B. Smith Jr.

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A Dream Of Hope

Portrayed as a monster, forced to be locked in a cage. But yet the world see's no wrong in such doings. The injustice goes beyond the prisons. Beyond the jails and beyond the court rooms. The real injustice lies within the people who condone the Death Penalty. It's a crime to murder as it is a crime to steal. Many see the Death Penalty as a means to get even. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Yet there's no crime in that, per say... Whether innocent or guilty, to God be the judge. A man must answer for his own faults, in the Day Of Judgment. Who is a judge, district attorney or any other whom see's no wrong in supporting and upholding to put an expiration date on someones life.

Many days I day dream about my past, but the reality invades my dreams. "A Dream? A Dream! But what does it mean? And crazy this may seem. I live in a daze, fearing my death. Putting my heart each day to a test. Tears in my eyes and a pain in my soul. A heart full of stories that have never been told. But what can I do to change my fate and reside everlasting behind the heavenly gates? Yes I believe in God and yes I have faith. Yet the ones who support the Death Penalty, say it's too late"... It's sad when your dreams are not even safe. But technically, there's no wrong in that either. United we stand, yet divided we fall. Join the fight to help ease the struggle. Let us stand united against the injustice of the Death Penalty and let no-one steal our dream of HOPE to Abolish the Death Penalty.

By: Justice Knight Z806/N13

"A Traveling Man"

Alabama News  
2017 1st Quarter

\* Ronald B. Smith was executed by the state of Alabama on Dec. 8, 2016. Ron was our chairman and friend. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, as we remember him throughout this issue.

\* Executive Director, Esther Brown, attended a tribute program to "Southeast Alabama Gazette" publishers, Ann and Hillard Hamm. We expressed our appreciation for their support over the years, and wish them the best upon their retirement.

\* The issue of judicial override is being addressed by the Alabama legislature. While it is too early in the session to know the outcome, we would like to thank those who have shown support (special thanks to Stephen Stetson for speaking on the bill in committee). We encourage you to continue to contact your representatives in Montgomery.

\* Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, along with Attorney General Bob Ferguson, is proposing legislation to abolish the death penalty in his state. Gov. Inslee has stated that there will be no executions on his watch, and this bill would make that permanent.

\* Federal appeals court rules Ohio's execution protocol unconstitutional. This is the same three-drug protocol that Alabama currently uses.

\* Florida has decided to drop midazolam from their execution protocol, moving to an untried anesthetic, etomidate.

\* The Abolition Action Committee (AAC) organized a rally at the Supreme Court to mark the 40th anniversary of the first modern death penalty execution. We thank those who participated, especially the 18 who were arrested that day.

\* The Alabama Attorney General's office has asked the Alabama Supreme Court to set an execution date for death row inmate Robert Bryant Melson. Attorneys for Mr. Melson will ask the court to deny the motion, considering the questions that exist regarding Alabama's method of execution.

\* Executive Director, Esther Brown, attended the Quarterly Meeting of the Alabama State Conference of the NAACP. Providing death penalty updates in her role as Chairperson of the Death Penalty Moratorium Committee.

\* Executive Director, Esther Brown, also attended the S.O.S. meeting ins Selma. She will also attend Alabama Arise Legislative Day on February 28 in Montgomery at the State Capitol Auditorium, where many state representatives will be present.

Vengeance is not the point; change is. But the trouble is that in most people's minds the thought of victory and the thought of punishing the enemy coincide.

-Barbara Deming

When you arrive on death row, you arrive alone! You normally don't know anyone...there's no friends or family. So you arrive out of sorts, on guard, on the lookout for and expecting prison games, (you've heard stories about) and attacks. Instead what I found were extended hands, good attitudes and caring people. Then came an invitation to attend an orientation of a prison organization called Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty. Yeah, right! Then I thought I don't have anything else to do so I can at least go hear what these guys have to say. I listened and I heard what they had to say (because there is a difference between just listening and actually hearing what is being said), and I liked what I heard.

This organization had been formed out of compassion for another human being who had had an execution date scheduled, approached the guys asking them to save him and leaving them disoriented and heartbroken for their lack of not knowing how to save him and not knowing how to try. So, out of that injustice came their sense of duty. A sense of duty not just to themselves but to the other guys as well. A duty to educate themselves, the other guys, friends, family and the public about all of the injustices involved in having the death penalty. A sense of duty to fight! Yes, I heard what they had to say and it all spoke to me. So, I didn't hesitate to join and the more I learned about this organization the more I knew I just had to be a part of it.

There was a guy whose father was a high ranking Ku Klux Klan member and who because of his misguided attempt to garner some sort of approval from his father made a terrible mistake. When he arrived on death row the administration wanted and planned to keep him isolated from the other guys because the crime he was convicted of was racist in nature. However the guys approached the administration and informed them that he would be alright and that there would be no trouble. Of course it took some convincing and negotiating but eventually the administration allowed him to be around the other guys and he received the very same invitation to a Project Hope orientation as I would. I would eventually come to meet and know this person, a man with a good heart and extended had to help his brothers, no matter the race.

So when asked "what does Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty mean to me"...a compassion for fellow human beings, a duty to educate myself and others on all the injustices involved in having the death penalty (because as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere"), and a duty to stand up and fight. Family is not always the one you're born into, but sometimes the one you choose or that chooses you!

Be Blessed and Keep Hope Alive,  
Anthony Boyd

Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People

HOPE + FAITH + PATIENCE = JUSTICE

Project Hope

What is Project Hope? Until it's one of your loved ones, it's just a group of individuals fighting for a cause, "All Lives Matter"! I say this because the paid tax dollars of many are used to execute lives that matter. Have you had anyone on Death Row or awaiting trial? If not, I am sure you know somebody that knows somebody on Death Row or awaiting trial with the Death Penalty on the table. Project Hope believes in Equal opportunity for all with God's given breath. You can easily support Project Hop and God's Will by standing up for a brother or sister, a friend or enemy. Project Hope, we uphold what God has already done, sent someone in place of our sins. We fight against death!! Whom is more powerful than God to issue out a time frame on another individuals life? Alabama on the other hand thinks they are God. Project Hope says "NO YOU ARE NOT"! Alabama says even with its statues being unconstitutional, we can still murder whom ever we want under it because no one is going to stop us. Project Hope seeks to expand with family members built on a community of love, peace, patience, humility and HOPE - So we can have this One Nation we keep hearing about, to see how long one can keep violating the Constitution and get away with it. You want to support the Right cause? Project Hope is the answer!

\*\*\* Join Us Today \*\*\*

By: Jovan Gaston Z802

A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it. We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive or gain by love and information.  
. . . Force may subdue, but love gains. And one that forgives first wins the laurel.

William Penn

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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.***



Judge Nominee Neil Gorsuch

New Shadow of Death for the U.S. Supreme Court

Executions have found a supreme handshake in the Supreme Court if he is approved. With Trump's nominee pick, who doesn't shy away from violating the 8th Amendment in recent rulings. Botch drug friends like Midazolam and several of its brothers used as execution drugs, will be glad to see their buddy - Judge Neil from the 10th Circuit, has a cheerleader going into the 9 body Supreme Court.

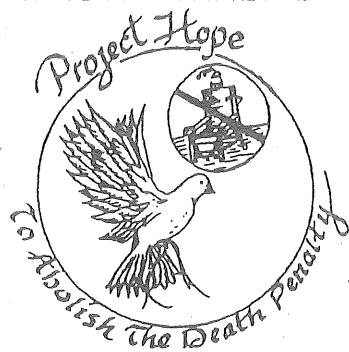
Judge Gorsuch determined that badly botched executions were innocent misadventures or isolated mishaps and ruled the executions that went horribly wrong, were not deliberately indifferent. With a new friend like Neil in the U.S. Supreme Court - Botched executions, 8th Amendment Cruel and Unusual Punishment, also Human Rights - which is a basic humanity gift of God, may be drowning in their own voices to be heard for the indigent, wrongfully convicted and those represented by ineffective justice from unprepared lawyers.

By: Internal Exiler 33

Untitled

I've come this far to freedom  
And I wont turn back.  
I'm climbing to the highway  
From my old dirty track.  
I'm coming and I'm going  
I'm stretching and I'm growing.  
I'll reap what I've been sowing  
And my skin still black.  
I've prayed and slaved and waited  
And I've sung my song.  
You've bled me and starved me  
But I'm still growing stronger.  
You've lashed me and you've treed me  
You've done everything but freed me.  
But in due time you'll need me  
And it wont be long.  
I've seen the daylight breaking  
High above the trees.  
I've found my destination  
And I've made my plea.  
Mighty mountains loom before me  
And I wont stop now!

By: N.O. "The Artist"



# A Christian Perspective

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Hello Everyone,

2017 has not come in without some clouds and sad memories from 2016. But with you guys continuing to be on our side, I'll hope continue - We will as well. So I thank you. As you will see, some of our offices have changed. Yet we will do our best in continuing to keep the education and informing the public of this injustice. 2017, will be a year of more focus for us to get ahead of things before they crawl upon us. There are so many things that we have learned from 2016. That we as an organization could have done better and we WILL do better.. 2017, pretty much assures us that there will be a Justice appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. And we currently have cases that will be heard by them next term. McWilliams v. Dunn in his attacking of the 14th Amendment and his Due Process. This case could have a real effect on cases on appeal and going forth. So, our eyes will be watching closely. Whether or not the court will select to hear the Hurst Ruling in Alabama, is yet to be seen. We have had a few cases to go there, some on direct appeal. Which they almost never hear during that stage of appeals; and others that have pretty much been timed or procedurally barred from review. But all hope is not gone. There are cases that have been timely filed and are in good standing to set precedent in the Hurst ruling. But our hope moreso lies in a higher power and we ask that you all continue to be with us. Please remember Ron's family. And I would also like to thank you all, for the emails and calls to the Gov. on Ron's behalf. We now see that the Republicans want to make changes in Alabama's Sentencing. But this is only a slightly waved white flag to what is happening in the courts already. But we've always known that if change came to the Alabama Judicial System, it would be because of a higher court. But as always, we will keep hope alive and continue to push forth. Please continue to be the wind that pushes us.

Respectfully Your Chairman,  
Anthony Tyson Z641/N17  
Holman 3700  
Atmore, Alabama 36503



## Grab Hold

This is your life, but everyone wants to tell you what to do with it-everyone else seems to think they know what is best for it. But wait just a minute. It is your life, right? Yes that is right, it is. And you have been given the free will, the choice of how you will live it. Parents and teachers can really only offer guidance, but the ultimate choices you make will be entirely yours. At the end of the day, you are the plan maker or breaker. You will decide if you will attend college and which career path you will take. You will choose the type of employment position you will take, or turn down. You will decide what type of friend and spouse you will be; even what type of son or daughter you will end up to your parents. But for now, it seems that no one understands all of the things you are going through, and you feel like your problems are too complex to even bother to talk about them. That, or no one really listens to what you are saying. Everybody wants you to be quiet and just listen. They want to talk at you, instead of talk to you. Would it not be great if someone would just listen-I mean really listen closely to what you have to say, and not just for the moment, but for the rest of your life? A true friend that you could confide in; someone that you could freely and openly talk to about your opinions, your fears, and all of the pressures you deal with everyday. Someone you could cry to when things seem all out of whack and you are stressed out and someone who would not mock you because of it. Someone you could share all of your dreams, for now and for the future.

His name is Allah (God). He is my best friend. Why don't you talk to Him.

Craig Newton

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### Untitled

For in and out, above, about, below,  
Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,  
Play'd in a box whose candle is the sun  
Round which we phantom figures come and go.

Are you playing the game or are you part of the game and don't know. Because there is a game being played on all of us. Politics is one of the games that's being played that you are a part of. "Your vote counts," if you believe that, you're not even in the game.

Religion is another, "have faith" is like saying, you're not smart enough to figure out what's being said, so have faith and you will be ok.

Justice too, but justice is a joke, its like "have faith" you hand authority to somebody else, so you don't have to do it. In the game of justice you have two sides. Those with money, and those without. The constitution says justice for all, but were my people at the table? Does it truly apply to us? As long as you let someone else dictate your life, you're just a piece on the board for someone else to move.

Jessie MDY Phillips

It Speaks For Itself

Growing up, I was always told "if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." During this entire presidential campaign and election process, I've had many negative thoughts. It's hard to find anything positive to say about this system, so I've remained silent. In these past two months, things have steadily declined as tension rises world wide. Protests, riots, murders, a lot of finger-pointing, and even serious threats of war; what good can be said about this all?

With such a serious issue as the death penalty, this is a tough time for its opponents. Not only are right wing Republicans marking their territory and staking new claims, such as the newest Supreme Court justice, or the new Attorney General, but it appears that all of our efforts to save lives, fix a corrupt justice system, and restore our country back to its rightful place as leaders of the world are being swept under the rug and silenced by all of the recent drama, as well as Trump's horse and pony show.

While the newly elected president of the United States is busy lying to the citizens of America, while he is busy shaking his finger at clothing stores for dropping his daughter's clothing line, American soldiers are being shot and murdered due to his inexperienced military decision making skills, and Alabama has murdered a man, who by law shouldn't have been on death row to begin with.

December 8, Ronald Smith Jr. was executed after the jury could not return with enough votes to warrant a death sentence. In any other state in this country, that would have spared his life. In Alabama, the judge, one man, has the power to override the decision of the jury that this country's constitution gives us the right to be tried by. Constitutionally, American's have the right to be tried by a jury of their peers. So why does the judge, in Alabama, have the authority to override the decision made by the jury that the U.S. constitution guarantees us? This is just one of many atrocities that are being swept under the rug; and one of many questions that may not be answered or fixed anytime soon.

This is one time that I will not be giving my opinion. Why should I? What would be the point? It's not necessary. I just painted the picture for you, and as they say, "a picture is worth a thousand words." It speaks for itself.

Castro

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Change Is Consistent

There is certainly a lot of ground to cover for this newsletter. PHADP lost a dedicated member last Dec. when the state executed Ron Smith. Even now I haven't fully come to terms with this loss. To say this is a unique situation would be an understatement, but he is in a better place, and he would certainly want us to continue in our mission. Ron would use a sports analogy, so I will too. Everyone loses at some point, that's why you play the games, but it's a long season, and we can still come out on top.

The board had to make some changes, these are listed on page 2, and Nick Smith and Sherman Collins have moved up to the sub-board. I believe we are well situated to continue the work of our predecessors.

Both at the state and national level there have been some changes, with a potential new Supreme Court justice, Neil Gorsuch, and Jeff Sessions as the U.S. Attorney General. Gov. Bentley appointed Luther Strange to fill Sessions' Senate seat, and Steve Marshall to the Alabama Attorney General spot. While nothing here signals anything other than business as usual for the death penalty in Alabama, it does at least bring the U.S. Supreme Court back up to nine justices.

The proposed legislation to end jury override in Alabama is a step in the right direction, but it barely made it out of committee. Alabama continues to lag behind the rest of the country in how it treats juvenile and mentally disabled capital defendants. We are also keeping an eye on Washington and Montana as the efforts to abolish the death penalty there progress.

A federal court has ruled the same three-drug protocol that botched Ron Smith's execution is unconstitutional. And even though this happened in Ohio, we are hopeful that this barbaric practice can and will be outlawed here as well. Midazolam has never been an appropriate drug to use in executions, and one has to wonder how many times it must fail before it is abandoned. Florida has signaled that they are ready to move one, although with yet another untried anesthetic, etomidate. What's wrong with testing these drugs on the worst of the worst? That's the problem, they aren't. Ron Smith certainly wouldn't have been eligible for the death penalty outside of Alabama, and nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Florida's death row may be resentenced due to their unconstitutional sentencing scheme.

Meanwhile, in Mississippi, they are bringing back the firing squad. I encourage you to contact your representatives in Montgomery to let them know how you feel about the death penalty, otherwise they might assume you support death at any cost...

Bart Johnson

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## Untitled Feeling

Hard times for desperate measures. I sit back and meditate on the time spent on the Row, the people I've met, and the transitions that have been made. It would make most people sad, but all of it motivates me to continue the fight, to fight harder for my freedom, to prove my innocence...

How though I have limited myself from becoming close to guys on the Row because most of them don't care about their case, and going through seeing a friend being led to the slaughter is difficult. So to protect me, I choose to limit myself from people.

Giving In or Up Is Not An Option

Randy Lewis  
Z-741 / O-19

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Dear World,

Hello how are you doing? My name is Jovan Gaston. A new activist in "All Lives Matter". I could easily say "End The Death Penalty", but whom all would agree. So let me explain my argument to you.

No case is perfect in matters so ending a man's or woman's life it is not justifiable. How do you end them? "Death Penalty"!! I say this because murder is of intent, yet whom has the intent? The person who is carrying out the crime, that's who. When a judge or jury does not know beyond a reasonable doubt that a defendant is guilty, they should weigh the evidence and if the shoe does not fit for murder - then of course that person is not guilty. Now a days, the court system is not of justice which it was originated for, instead they see it as a job and an obligation to sentence at least 85% or more Capital Cases to Death. With such intent they are now First Degree Murderers hiding behind a justice system that they never use. Coming into their world as an innocent man, no murder being carried out by me - no kidnapping or robbery; I maintained innocence until the judge with intent, sentenced and hired the state to kill me. Whether you are familiar with the law or not, I am here to tell you Murder\*Hire is a Capital offense which is subjected to a Death Sentence. Unlike the unproven cases they handle while carrying out these crimes. World it's up to you to defend our people cause like many it could be you at the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time. And instead of justice, you run into a judge or jury who is just carrying out a job and find yourself being like my many brothers on Death Row. Again, my name is Jovan Gaston. A new Activist in "All Lives Matter". And I approve of this message in Loving Memory of Ron Smith whom was killed by the State Of Alabama. Hired by the judges to murder him.

\*\*\* All Lives Matter \*\*\*

Sincerely Yours,

Jovan Gaston Z802

## Lethal Injection: Have We Become the New Guinea Pigs?

Guinea pig, Cavy for domestic guinea pig or cuy for livestock breeds, is a species of rodent belonging to the family Caviidae and the genus Cavia. Guinea pig is a scientific phrase coined in the 1800s by the early germ theorists. An 1886 tract called "Some Fallacies of Science" bemoaned the using of guinea pigs by Robert Koch, a country doctor working out of his cottage in Wollstein Germany, whose work amounted to determining the length of time a new poison takes to kill a guinea pig.

There is a plethora of lethal injection protocols. Until 2009 most states used a 3 drug combination for lethal injection: an anesthetic (usually sodium thiopental, until pentobarbital was introduced at the end of 2010), pancuronium bromide (a paralytic agent, also called Pavulon), and potassium chloride (stops the heart and causes death). Due to drug shortages, states have adopted new lethal injection methods. Eight states have used a single drug method for executions, a lethal dose of an anesthetic (Arizona, Georgia, Idaho, Missouri, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington). While six other states have announced plans to use a one-drug protocol but have yet to carry out such an execution. Fourteen states have used pentobarbital in executions. One state had planned to use propofol, the drug Michael Jackson overdosed on, but have since changed their protocol (Missouri). Midazolam has been used in three states as the first drug in a three-drug protocol (Florida, Oklahoma, and Alabama). Oklahoma's use of midazolam resulted in the botched execution of Clayton Lockett, who actually died in the emergency room of cardiac arrest after his execution was halted. Alabama's execution of Ronald Smith was botched using midazolam after Mr. Smith heaved and coughed for fifteen minutes after he was given the lethal cocktail.

The list goes on and on about the fact that the new lethal injection protocols amounts to the states using human beings as mere guinea pigs. As more states scramble to come up with different ways to execute someone, the risk of pain and suffering continues to go up. Some states would have you believe that the lethal injection procedures are harmless and painless due to the fact that the human reaction to the lethal cocktail shows it, but the pain a person feels during these procedures is masked by the fact that they are paralyzed and cant respond. So, I believe it is time to put in place the best lethal injection protocol and the most cost efficient protocol, which is to not have a lethal injection protocol and abolish capital punishment.

Jeffery Lee  
The Caring Christian

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

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