

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



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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's foibles rather than their 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, 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 and the media 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 he represents. 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 what Esther 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 especially in these contentious times where there is so much discord in the air. 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



**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**

Dear Family & Friends,

2018 has been a fast track year. The state of Alabama started the year off by setting executions every month up until April. We lost 2 of our brothers, unfortunately. Walter Moody and Michael Eggers. Both will be truly missed and their family and friends will continue to be in our prayers. As this is an election year for 2 of the biggest names in the state concerning the death penalty, we were not shocked to see the dates and the denials of clemency. But we continue on seeking ways in which we can educate and motivate to vote, we can't, as a 501(C)(3) organization, tell a voter in which way to vote, but will encourage all to vote, and vote with purpose. You can't go wrong if you pray before you vote. May has marked our 29th year of operation, it has been a long journey since our first chairman Jesse Morrison said those words "Be the Other Voice!" As a group, we have been taking a look back to our past and seeing from whence we came, and what a journey. It's been exciting to see the growth and maturity of "Hope" over the last 29 years. We have sub-board members today that weren't even born when this organization was founded. The thing that touched me the most was looking back at the things that I have personally learned.

Darrell Grayson was my first chairman, and as he would grow, he would make sure those to follow learned as well. That is also what Hope is about. We don't just set out to educate the public, but each other as well. I would like to give a loud applause to Bryan Stevenson and EJI for their hard and dedicated work in establishing the Legacy Museum in Montgomery last month. We have read and heard great things about this historical event. Also, we would like to say congratulations to Anthony Ray Hinton for his book, "The Sun Does Rise," it was a very interesting read, he is a great story teller, we wish him well and we are sure it will sell millions.

We continue to see capital convictions throughout the state and this causes me to pause, whether the purpose of the death penalty is really working, or are some of those too preoccupied with the president's tweets to see the error of the death penalty deterring crime. We continue and we wish you all a great summer. Stay cool, Stay blessed, and stay focused.

Your Chairman
I remain

Anthony Tyson Z641 N-17

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1989 TWENTY YEARS OF HOPE 2009

As we gratefully celebrate twenty years of Hope it is appropriate to remember our history and those who made it happen, our founding brothers. There is none better to guide us in this than Jesse Morrison, co-founder of our organization, and so I asked him to help us to remember and here are his notes:

"In May of 1989 Jesse Morrison and Wallace Norrell Thomas got together a committee of five, which included Johnny Harris, (Danny Siebert after Harris was transferred), James "Bo" Cochran and Joe Duncan. This committee worked for 4-5 months getting the structure together.

Around September we had the structure in place, along with the name of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty, and began open membership, setting up study groups, classes and different committees.

Around December, the officers of the organizations held the first meeting on the visiting yard with potential members of outside board of advisers and supporters.

The very first initiative was Wallace and I writing two articles, *From Alabama Death Row and Black America and the Death Penalty*. We sent out over 300 copies to black churches, black colleges, black newspapers nationwide, death penalty organizations and friends and families.

As our membership grew, we expanded the committee, and had to replace some. The new members were Brian Baldwin, Gary Brown, Leroy White and Ward Gentry."

I asked Jesse to say a little something about our founding brothers and here it is:

Wallace Norrell Thomas, executed 1990: "the political and legal mind of the group. On death row, he was the constant voice for change in conditions as well as the legal system."

Johnny Harris, "mentor/advisor, knew Alabama prison system officials and had outside contacts and support system but was transferred soon after the beginning."

Bo Cochran, exonerated in 1997 and still supportive of phadp, "solid supporter who had the respect of all death row inmates."

Joe Duncan "solid supporter, willing to take a stand against the system, eager to get involved."

Danny Siebert, died in 2008, "knowledgeable about organizational structure and running a campaign. Got involved only at my request."

Gary Brown, executed 2003, "was asked to come aboard to help recruit whites and Christian inmates. Proved to be a very hardworking and totally committed member."

Brian Baldwin, executed in 1999, "my most valued co-worker; took on the job of building our newsletter; acted as my confidant and advisor on all the important decisions I had to make; brought a lot of outside members into the organization. Brian was very popular, fun-loving, outgoing but also had a quick, intelligent mind, which allowed him to not only grasp an issue but to see it from all sides."

continued...

Jesse Morrison gave me the task to write about him. We have been close friends for the last ten years, ever since my dear friend Brian Baldwin's execution. In recalling the birth of PHADP he wrote: "I was only doing what I thought was right and necessary at the time, and I was mad as hell." If ever there was an example of channeling anger into positive action, our organization was it. 1989 was the year of four executions, a record, which we are likely to break this year.

In writing about Jesse I could talk about his natural charisma, his leadership qualities, his fighting spirit, but all of those would mean nothing if they were not about what was right and necessary. Jesse sees a problem and wants to address it for the sake of those around him. After his sentence was commuted to life without parole, he tried to found the Lifers group, and when that was denied, start a NAACP chapter in the prison, all ways to bring hope and meaning to a place where there is little of either. It is the loss of the Department of Corrections that it denied permission for both.

Jesse is famous for his admonition to "be the other voice!" He lives that and is at his very best when he can inspire, motivate, work hard, and bring people together for the common good. He wants to make a difference and he has in so many of our lives, even in the lives of some who do not know him because they came to death row after his re-sentencing.

I know I have repeatedly attempted to explain the spirit of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty, which still endures now that we are 20 years old. When I read Bo what Jesse had written over the phone, there was silence and then I heard sobs and the words "we were family." Yes, you were and we still are and we thank our dear friend Jesse Morrison and all who were part of the beginning for this vision. We thank you for daring to dream a bold dream and for not counting the cost. We do not forget and we love you!

Jesse Morrison and Esther Brown



**REPORT FROM ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER JUDY COLLINS FROM THE EJI
"CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IN AMERICA" PRESENTATION**

"Who could have imagined we'd ever see something like this in our lifetime," exclaimed intrepid abolitionist Murphy Davis outside the EJI bookstore, tapping Jim's shoulder, "Good shirt!" The back of it proclaimed, "The Death Penalty Is: Arbitrary, Not a Deterrent, Racially & Economically Biased, More Costly than a Life Sentence, Does Nothing for Victims, Kills Innocent People, Sanctions Violence, Mocks Justice, A Human Rights Abuse—ABOLISH IT."

With immense thanks to EJI which had given guest tickets to PHADP for the "Criminal Justice Reform in America" presentation, Jim and I were "shirt-witnessing" for abolition (I, with PHADP's original "Execute Justice, Not People"). What an immense gift also to see Murphy and her husband Ed Loring who continue their life works of compassion and for justice, now in Baltimore after over 30 years as founders of Atlanta's Open Door Community. Her joyous greeting—after yet another victory over almost fatal cancer—typified the spirit of that indeed amazing event where people from all over this country and even the world converged on Montgomery AL to examine at EJI's Legacy Museum and Peace and Justice Memorial the deep roots from which torturous cries have pierced the skies over generations. As Atty. Steven Bright declared in the session we attended, "Criminal justice was the part of the system least affected by the civil rights movement. 80% of the death penalties has been in the southern states. When the South got bad press about lynching, it was moved into the courthouse."

Ray Hinton's testimony after having been a death row inmate for 30 years was a profound example of that. Having seized the lawn-mowing youth from his back yard, then handcuffing, and driving him to jail for a crime Ray knew nothing about, the cop turned to him, "I don't care whether you're innocent or not—your prosecutor will be white, your attorney white, like the judge and all the jury. You will be guilty." Hinton's victory with a 9-0 ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that his original lawyer had been "Constitutionally incapable" was achieved through Bryan Stevenson's determined work.

And now that work is lifting up for people to recognize the truths of our torturous past so that finally we can begin the healing from a system that in many ways, "Sanctions Violence," as the shirt proclaims. As many addressing violence in the U.S. proclaim, we have a critical "public health" problem. Continuing the medical analysis: a boil has to be lanced before it can heal. And thus we must continue the painful work of probing the truths (when even now 95% of the prosecutors are white, 4% are black, only 1% are women of color) before we can begin essential healing and reconciliation.

In keeping with the theme of progress and change as we celebrate Project Hope's history, the butterfly symbolizes, as it transforms from caterpillar to beautiful creature, the vision we have for the future.

But in that work we can recall that during the '90s, there had been 315 death sentences in just one year. In 2017 there were 39, in 2016, 35. That is something to celebrate!

And there are people like Bryan Stevenson, like Murphy and Ed, like PHADP's executive director Esther Brown who during the EJI event was back in FL where many years ago she risked her life by being wired to get the proof determining innocence of and release for two black death row inmates. May 9 is her 85th birthday, and it will assuredly be another day when she, like multitudes of other Alabamians, particularly participants in the 2018 Poor Peoples Campaign, are tenaciously following Dr. King's call: ""We are trying to remind the nation of the urgency of the moment. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to transform Alabama, the heart of Dixie, to a state with a heart for brotherhood and peace and good will. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children."



WHO IS THE REAL MONSTER

It never ceases to amaze me how bad the "justice system" wants us dead. These states have jumped through every loophole, broken laws, and now intend on using an experimental method to execute us.

Without having to go too far back in our modern history, we find countless attempts on our lives that have been botched or ended in the painful and gruesome demise of inmates on death row. From burned bodies due to the use of the electric chair, to excruciating lethal injections of illegally procured cocktails of deadly drugs that have left people screaming and writhing in agony until their hearts finally stopped beating.

Now, after countless efforts to spare lives, to keep people from being tortured to death, after numerous cases have come before the Supreme Court, after drug companies have refused to allow their drugs to be bought by states to carry out their evil deeds, they are now preparing to use Nitrogen gas to execute us. It's a new method, never before used, experimental, no data supporting the humane (or lack thereof) murders. Instead of saving tax payer's money, instead of admitting the wrongs of their actions in an attempt to murder and take the lives of inmates, states are actively and aggressively searching out new ways to carry out these heinous acts. So you tell me...Who is the real monster, the inmate, or the state who is willing to go to the ends of the world to do the exact same thing we are being accused of; heinous, atrocious, and cruel murders?

A Christian Perspective

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Greetings Family & Friends,

As we celebrate the 29th Anniversary of our organization, we wanted to remember where we came from. Remind ourselves and our supporters of our purpose and our accomplishments. And to renew our passion for being the other voice.

You will find the usual content, shining a light on the injustice, inefficiency, and the incompatibility with human rights inherent to the death penalty. Relevant and timely info on developments relating to capital punishment, of course, but an effort has been made to incorporate some important and weighty pieces from and about our past.

We think you'll agree that it is an honor to follow in the footsteps of the men who have represented PHADP over the years. Men who brought a sense of community, a sense of family, and most of all, a sense of hope to a place that could easily be dark and devoid of all that. We would be remiss if we didn't take the baton that they've passed to us and carry it as far and as fast in the right direction as we possibly can.

Just as we've been inspired and motivated by reflections on our organizations history, we hope that this look back will give our supporters a desire to make a difference. Every election brings possibilities for change, but this year especially. We encourage everyone to show up and vote. We have come far, and with your help we can continue to move closer to the abolition of the death penalty in Alabama.

With Gratitude,

Bart Johnson
Vice Chairman



UNTITLED

Gabriel came to the Lord and said, "I have to talk to you, I have Black folks up here in Heaven who are causing problems. They are swinging on the Pearly Gates, my horn is missing, barbecue sauce is all over their robes, ham hock, spare rib, and pig feet bones are all over the streets of gold. Some folks are walking around with one wing. They have been late taking their turn keeping the stairway to Heaven clean. There are water melon seeds all over the clouds. Some of them aren't even wearing their halos, saying it is messing up their hair."

The Lord said, "I made them special, as I did you my angel. Heaven is home to all my children. If you really want to know about problems, let's call the Devil."

The Devil answered the phone, "Hello? Dang, hold on." The Devil returned to the phone and said, "Hello Lord, what can I do for you?" The Lord replied, "Tell me what kind of problems are you having down there."

The Devil said, "Wait one minute," and put the Lord on hold.

After 5 minutes he returned to the phone, and said, "Okay, I'm back, what was the question?"

The Lord said, "what kind of problems are you having down there?"

The Devil said, "Man, I don't believe...hold on, Lord! This time the Devil was gone for 15 minutes. The Devil returned and said, "I'm sorry Lord, I can't talk right now. These Negroes done put the fire out and are trying to install air conditioning!"

See, when you in Hell, you have to do something, you can't just sit around and let the Devil rule over you. Yes, they will smile at you from time to time, even have a lil fun with you. But in the end, they still want to kill you.

Remember, only God can tell you what you do is wrong, but anybody can put you in hell. What do you think death row is, but a hell that someone put you in.

And if you don't fight to get out, it's like they say, it's all fun and games until that needle hits your arm.

So you better try and put the fire out and put in an air-conditioner like we do, because it's getting too hot in here for some of us.

Jessie MDY Phillips



Word List
BARE FEET
BEACH
BOAT
FLIP FLOPS
FLOWERS
ICE CREAM
LEMONADE
POOL
STRAWBERRIES
SUMMER
SUNSCREEN
SUNSHINE
SWIMMING
UMBRELLA
WATERMELON

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 L E M O N A D E W Q G R F B E  
 F I G K G I T E A I E I P R V  
 P L I A H L N H T F Z E N I N  
 D A O C B I T B E S F U Y Q N  
 H I A W H E B A R W L V X J K  
 S E K S E S C R M I N G F K N  
 B E N E J R Q E E M Z K L Y G  
 G U J P A P S F L M S Y I L H  
 S H Q J O W S E O I U R P H F  
 P R S A N O G E N N M D F P G  
 W K Q R D A L T U G M R L G R  
 V N I C E C R E A M E S O J C  
 U M B R E L L A H E R G P X R  
 T S T R A W B E R R I E S I L  
 Y B O A T S U N S C R E E N M
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HIS ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS

Today as I'm meditating on what it means to have our prayers or requests to God answered.

We as believers have a promise from God in Psalm 91:15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him...

We ask God for strength, but we are made weak, that we might learn humility to obey. We ask for health, but we are given infirmity, that we might do better things.

We ask for riches, but are given poverty, that we might be wise.

We ask for power, but are given weakness, that we might feel the need of God.

We ask for all things, but are given "Zoe" (the life of God), that we might enjoy all things.

Speaking from a personal experience of walking with God by faith for thirty-plus years, that I often pray to God to be delivered from my afflictions, and even trust that God will do it for me. Smile!

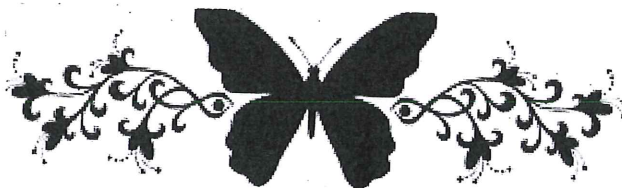
But very seldom do I pray for God to make me what I should be, while in the midst of my afflictions. Nor do I pray that I should be able to live within them, for however long they may last, with the awareness by faith that I am being held and sheltered by His love, grace, and truth. Amen.

That verse that I mentioned earlier from Psalm 91:15...ends with this promise "I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him." and that's enough for me Smile!

With much love, peace, & joy for you all!

Earl J. McGahee Sr.

Z-466 H-18



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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.



STRONG FOUNDATION

Twenty-nine years ago a call for help was answered. A fellow inmate had received an execution date and he didn't have any idea what he was going to do. He didn't want to die. So the young man asked his friends and brothers around him for help. They could have ignored him and done nothing, but like any other caring human being they chose to try and help him. The young man was executed but the call to service was answered and it birthed the non-profit group Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty.

The original pioneers had a vision and they put actions to their vision. Jesse Morrison and Wallace Norrell Thomas, two friends on Alabama Death Row put together an all-star cast of fellow inmates who possessed different and unique talents that were relevant to the task. The group consisted of Norrell Thomas who had an excellent political and legal mind; Danny Siebert whose organizational skills were amazing and who only joined through some intense urging by Jesse; Brian Baldwin whose networking skills were brilliant before modern technology and social media. Brian brought in a lot of outside advisors and built the newsletter. Johnny Harris helped mentor and advise the group. Jesse Morrison stayed active even after getting off death row and remained an advisor. Initially a friend of Jesse's from Wisconsin did the outside work and after she retired Jim Allen and Judy Collins, a couple living in Alabama took over for four years. The group was established with structure and precision and it was successful and made a difference to countless hopeless inmates here on Alabama's death row.

All of the original founding fathers of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty are dead and gone, may they rest in peace. Their vision lives on through us who have answered the call to help and decided to be on the front lines. Our Executive Director, Esther Brown has been on the front line for us and our group since June 1999. She is an outspoken advocate for justice here in Alabama and around the world.

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a Rock" Matthew 7:25.

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty has lasted and stood in the face of adversity for so long because it was founded to help the helpless and to give hope to the hopeless from the heart of some good and decent men!

Jeffery Lee

Sec/Treasurer

JUST THINKING

Reminiscing bout past times, as I beat the block
as sweat trails down my face...tic toc, tic toc
scrambling and scraping trying to get something to eat
A quick visit with my conscience, "who you trying to beat?"
as I look to the sky, "Lord let me feed my peeps."
Now I toss and turn, can't get no sleep is this it for me?
or am I still on the street...
Krazy how life goes, just glad someone's listening...

The Artist



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IT'S OUR ANNIVERSARY

Since 1989 brothers in physical bondage have been striving for liberation from an unjust system that's not upheld by society, but by the representatives voted in by society...

Along the way some brothers have fallen victim to the measures of death carried out by the state of Alabama. Others have made conscious decisions to call it quits on life to go on and dwell with their ancestors.

Some still remain, but are lost, beat down and drained by the toll the fight in this struggle has had on them...

The rest, we stand uniformly as we carry on the torch that has been entrusted to us.

Along the way we have gained a great crowd of dedicated supporters who have stood by our side and for our cause without fail.

And we thank you all!

Happy Anniversary to us, Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty.

Randy Lewis

Z-741 0-19