

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

# *On Wings of Hope*

Volume 23 Issue 1  
Jan. - Mar. 2019

Project Hope



*Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People*

**THANK YOU!**

This may well be the most challenging article that I have written in the past 18 years but one I do want to write because it is very important to me to say thank you to all of you. However what I will not attempt to do is to call names because if I did it right you know how much so many of you, both on the inside and what we call on the street, have meant to me and will forever mean to me.

And now to the question of how I would like to be remembered. At the risk of repeating myself because I know I have already said that to many of you, I would like to be remembered as someone who was incredibly fortunate. To begin with as I have already said for many years, my life was never boring. Does that mean it was particularly easy, of course not as there are not many lives that are. I was fortunate because I was able to meet the challenges that came my way, perhaps in part because I believed that there were many things worth doing even if one couldn't do them perfectly. One of my most treasured compliments came from a well known Atlanta attorney who introduced me as being relentless. Yes, I like that and that certainly helped with my being fortunate.

Maybe the other component was that I always received what I gave many times over. I was never a victim but did whatever I did because it expressed me and rewarded me. So how fortunate can one get? I believe also that I was fortunate because I had enough sense to go to those places where things were real: Death row, people with aids, the nursing home, the homeless, the developmentally delayed, addicts, the Haitian community in Boston and the psychiatrically ill. I was very fortunate!

And finally I was fortunate because the people in my life, yes you who is reading this, allowed me to succeed. What do I mean by that? I mean that you found what I brought to the table was good enough. I thank you for that and will be forever grateful to all of you, and if I have done it right you know who you are.

Esther

Dear Family and Friends,

I hope that this year has started off well for you all. As you know, on Feb 7th the state of Alabama killed our brother Domineque Ray. He will forever be remembered as our brother. On Oct. 1, 1998 I arrived at Holman. And did I think 20½ years later that I would still be here, NO! I came in thinking that this nightmare would be reversed sooner than later. But here I am. I arrived here at the age of 27 but I grew up, matured, here on Liferow. I have so many people that I could thank, some still here, but a lot have been murdered by the state. Throughout the years, I have met a lot of good men and each execution was different for me. But there was only one that truly hurt to the core of my soul. I still talk in prayers to my brother Derrick Mason. He was a true brother in every definition of the word. I became a member of the sub-board of PHADP in 2005, and within a couple of years I became a part of the board, and began the law class under the umbrella of PHADP. So, for over 10 years now, I have faithfully put in work for the guys here on the row and my fellow brothers of the board. I became a member of the board under the reign of Darrell Grayson, and 2 other Chairmen followed before I was voted in by my peers. I have totally learned a lot over the past couple of years and I look forward to learning even more but my term as Chairman and board member has run its course. I will continue to teach the law class and write articles for the newsletter. This will be my last editorial in the Chairman's seat, but not my last article. I truly enjoyed being your, the readers and supporters, chairman and I look forward to a bright future for PHADP. And I leave you all in great hands, whoever is elected to the seat. And please know this, we will always be family. I truly appreciate all of the advisory board members, past and present. As well as our donors who kept us financially able to do the things that we do here. And a special thank you goes out to Britta Slopianka for stepping up to become our Executive Director. We can't say thank you enough. My last request to all of the supporters of Hope is Please Vote! Please Vote! Please Vote! The USSC voted 5-4 to lift the stay and executed Domineque. Please Vote!

Your Chairman  
Anthony Tyson Z-641

**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.

**NATIONAL OFFICE:**

P.O. Box 14027, Jacksonville, FL 32238  
Email: [againstdethrows@gmail.com](mailto:againstdethrows@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.phadp.org](http://www.phadp.org)  
Email group: [phadp-mail-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:phadp-mail-subscribe@yahoo.com), also on Face Book:  
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty in Alabama

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Anthony Tyson, Chairman  
Bart Johnson, Vice Chairman  
Jeffery Lee, Sec./Treas.  
Jessie Phillips, Coordinator  
Anthony Boyd, Sgt At Arms  
Info Dir. Randy Lewis

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Anthony Tyson, Pres./CEO  
Bart Johnson, Vice Pres.  
Britta Slopianka, Executive Director

**DEVELOPMENT:** Brandon Fountain

**Executive Director Emeritus:** Esther Brown

**STUDENT REP:** Petra Jackson

**SPIRITUAL ADVISOR:** Donald Blocker

**BOARD OF ADVISORS**

Atty. Bryan Stevenson,  
Atty. Christine Lichtenfels, Callie Greer  
Atty. Kacey L Keeton, Assistant Federal Defender  
Robert M Wilson, Judy Collins,  
Claudia Whitman, Robin DeMonia  
Ann Williams, Ursula Malchou,  
Gary Drinkard, Shelley Douglass,  
Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy

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

Family, Friends, and Allies,

At this time, we would like to take a brief moment to inform all of you about a couple of transitional things concerning our organization. As many, or all of you, already know, Esther Brown had to step down as our Executive Director due to health reasons. We are all very saddened about this news. Since her stepping down, we have elected Esther's longtime friend and death penalty advocate Britta Slopianka as our new Executive Director, and our home office has been relocated to Jacksonville, Florida. However, we are sure that all of you have noticed that Esther has continued to be Esther (smile), and continues to be very active and visible in our organization, and the anti-death penalty community. That is due to the fact that Esther loves to "have her ducks in a row." She's working to make sure that our transitional period is as smooth as possible. That's just Esther being Esther! (smile)

We thank all of you for your patience, understanding, and continued support. Please know that there's no us without all of you.

Continue to be the other voice,  
Keep Hope Alive,  
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

**Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty  
P.O. Box 14027 Jacksonville, FL 32238**

againstdeathrows@gmail.com • www.phadp.org

**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. Donations may also be made by going to our website and clicking on "donate".**



A DIVIDED PEOPLE

People around the globe are watching as the United States descends into chaos and turmoil, on a path to self-implosion, not knowing the true depths of this countries division. This country is not just divided because of political party lines. It's not just a division of red states and blue states. It's not just that the highest court in this country is no longer rooted in the principles and integrity of equal justice for all, of which it was founded, and has become no more than a panel of political pawns. It's that there is no United in these States. The United States is a very imaginative concoction, devised by a handful of pranksters in a backroom, writing by candlelight.

A moral compass can only point you in the right direction, it can't make you go there. This could be, and should be the United States, but when you have a constitution and laws rooted in racism, division will always be there, and no amount of mendacious apologies will ever change that. However, relations were getting a little better for a brief period of time. Some states, and some people don't want relations to be better though. Those states, and those people thrive off of the racism, chaos, and turmoil. Now, the division has infiltrated into people's own races, as I've heard people say "he/she was the wrong kind of black, or he/she was the wrong kind of white!" Division! Not united!

Yes, this country elected a racist narcissist to lead it, to be president. A man-child who spends his late nights fighting tweeter wars with anyone who dares to speak out against him or his regime. In these states where people are elected because of the color of their skin, and not on the basis of their body of work, or the content of their character (thank you Dr. King), sits the death penalty. Subjected to laws rooted in racism, judged by political motivation, and murdered for the sake of revenge sits the men and women of Life Row.

As more and more states move away from capital punishment, and are even putting forth legislation to do away with it altogether, some states (mostly southern states) continue to tinker with the machinery of death. Are continuing to test their hands at playing God. When Alabama murdered Domineque Ray, they once again sparked a moral compass debate with their deplorable antics. Again showing how truly divided we are as a people. Leaving out there many questions. Are spiritual advisors at executions only allowed to be Christians? Not just that, but are only Christians allowed to take part in executions? Have any Muslims, or Jewish people volunteered to be on execution assassination squads, and been turned down for not being Christian? The questions could and should go on and on, but you get the point...United States of Division!

Ask the questions,  
Be Active  
Maximus Strong



UNTITLED

Most people when they see a person sentenced to death think "Good riddance" or "He deserves everything he gets!" They don't think about the days they spend in a 5 X 7 cell staring at the wall thinking about their life and how they ended up here. As the seconds and minutes tick by while fighting the suffocating heat and endless waves of roaches. Thinking about their families and how they are going to handle losing a loved one. Thinking of how their children are going to have to grow up without a father, their sister without a brother, a mother and father without a son. Day in and day out, the seconds tick to hours, the hours tick to days, and the days for years. Waiting for your turn to be executed That's not justice...That's torture! That's vengeance! That's the life of a death row inmate!

Derrick Dearman  
Z-811 / F-4



UNTITLED

Domineque Ray denied a constitutional right guaranteed by the United States Constitution and corresponding Articles of the Alabama Constitution... What is Due Process? What is equal protection? What is either when they are not acknowledged in the most pressing time where they are most desirable. A dying man's wishes are not met because of the desperation for blood from a blood thirsty people in a nation built on the slogan "We are they people!" Though voices cry for blood, for death, a louder voice cry from "We the people!" For due process of law as well as equal protection. Where any person is covered by the blanket of a blind eye, justice has failed her people, the flame of liberty is smothered out, as the original liberty wails the cry of "We the people" in hopes of her voice being heard and her tears to be seen by the authority in a land that's built on the spirit of "In God we trust!" Where's the gatekeeper whom the people seek to take a stand.

Randy Lewis  
Z-741 / 0-19

ALABAMA NEWS

First Quarter 2019

\* We were devastated when the Supreme Court lifted the 11th Circuit's stay of execution for Domineque Ray. He was killed by the state of Alabama on February 7, 2019. Our hearts are with the families at this difficult time. Thank you to everyone who spoke up, organized, prayed, or otherwise rejected state sanctioned homicide. Your support gives us hope that there will come a day when we overcome.

\* A special thanks to journalist Lauren Gill, whose articles "Domineque Ray Is Set To Be Executed Thursday. Did He Ever Really Have A Chance At Being Spared" and "Domineque Ray Is Executed In Alabama After Supreme Court Bid Fails" detail the injustices surrounding the legal battle and the execution. Her tireless efforts digging into Mr. Ray's case allowed us to see so many aspects that would have otherwise been lost.

\* Join us in welcoming our new Executive Director, longtime abolitionist, friend, and advisory board member Britta Slopianka. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated individual to provide the much needed support for us on the outside.

\* On March 1, 2019, The Alabama Conference of the NAACP will bestow our longtime Executive Director, fearless leader, and friend Esther Brown with their "Game Changer Award" in a ceremony at the Capitol City Club in Montgomery. This honor is in recognition of her years of work fighting to end the death penalty in Alabama.

\* Attorney Kacey L. Keeton, Assistant Federal Defender has agreed to join our Advisory Board. It is our great pleasure to honor her with this position for all she, and the Federal Defenders office has done for us.

\* Willie Dorrell Minor, 45, was found unresponsive in his cell on death row at Donaldson correctional facility on December 21, 2018. Minor was being treated for cancer, and the cause of death is listed as natural causes. Notably, in 2004, Minor attempted to organize a clemency petition effort on behalf of 74 yr old James Hubbard, urging the governor to halt the execution because Mr. Hubbard was too sick and frail to be executed.

\* Ohio Gov. DeWine announces a halt to all executions for the foreseeable future until the state can develop a constitutional method.

## **Child of Grace: A Death Row Story available in eBook formats**

The author is Dr. Chris Brown son of Gary Brown, a member of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty while on death row at Holman.

In an email to me Dr. Chris Brown wrote:

Dear Esther,

Enclosed is a copy of the book, *Child of Grace: A Death Row Story*. Project Hope (to Abolish the Death Penalty) was an important part of my Dad's life and I wanted you to have a copy. Thank you so much for everything you have done for all these years with Project Hope. I continue to follow it online and through the newsletters and engage when I can. Your work has been so important and so meaningful. Never lose hope!

Sincerely,

Chris Brown

**Paperback and Kindle version available on Amazon:**

<https://www.amazon.com/Child-Grace-Death-Row-.../.../1644162741/>

**Paperback and Nook version available at Barnes & Noble:**

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/child-of-grace.../1129951886...>

**eBook available from Apple:**

<https://itunes.apple.com/.../book/child-of-grace/id1450817885...>

© 2018 Child of Grace Books

[www.phadp.org](http://www.phadp.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/projecthopetoabolishthedeathpenalty>

NATIONAL OFFICE:  
P.O. Box 14027, Jacksonville, FL 32238  
Email: [againstdethrows@gmail.com](mailto:againstdethrows@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.phadp.org](http://www.phadp.org).

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Lanett, AL  
PERMIT NO. 67

### PRISON MINISTRY

That title might be a little misleading, but I wanted to lift up the men who participate in Holman's Life Row ministry. We have a unique situation with our ministry, much like every thing else here.

There are so many dedicated men on the outside who consistently give of themselves and their time to share their faith with us. I can't begin to express the extent with which these guys sacrifice to join us for Church services and Bible study classes. But they do whatever it takes to visit with us, even when they are turned around once they get here.

The men of Life Row also deserve a round of applause for sharing spiritually. No matter what religion or service, the men of Life Row continually put forth their time and effort to allow God to show Himself on Life Row.

Together, the volunteers on the outside, and the spiritual leaders on the inside manage to create an atmosphere where we can fellowship, despite all the practical hurdles that a prison ministry entails.

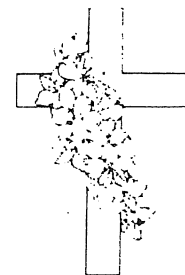
I'll leave you with this verse, "...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Because it's what's in a man's heart that counts, no matter where they are.

# A Christian Perspective

Produced By  
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

*God  
is  
Love*

Volume 23 Issue 1  
Jan. - Mar. 2019



Dear Family and Friends,

## Organizational Information

A Christian Perspective is  
Published by Project Hope  
To Abolish the Death  
Penalty. Address  
correspondence to: Bart  
Johnson, Editor  
(Z-778-F-18), Holman 3700,  
Atmore, AL 36503

## Editorial Staff

Editor  
Bart Johnson  
Assistant Editor  
Randy Lewis  
Writers-Contributing  
Jeffery Lee

## Executive Committee

Anthony Tyson  
President/CEO  
Bart Johnson  
Vice President  
Britta Slopianka  
Executive Director

Spiritual Advisor  
Donald Blocker

For more information  
about Project Hope to  
Abolish the Death Penalty,  
write to:  
PHADP, P.O. Box 14027  
Jacksonville, FL 32238

All articles in this  
newsletter may be  
reprinted without  
permission unless  
otherwise stated. We ask  
only that you put:  
*reprinted by permission  
of Project Hope to  
Abolish the Death  
Penalty, P.O. Box 14027  
Jacksonville, FL 32238*  
\*\*\*\*\*

Matthew 6:34 (KJV) tells us "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!"

The word of God has a way of inspiring us that day, for that day. So, as this verse from Matthew is telling me, today, to take things one day at a time and not to get ahead of myself, the same words may have a different effect on you, as it has at different times for me. It has given me great peace, patience, and right now it is telling me to focus on what is right in front of me.

We began 2019 with some new twists on the same challenges. The Supreme Court's lifting of the 11th Circuit stay of execution for Domineque Ray was unexpected, unprecedented, and painful for many. It's not easy for anyone to turn hurt and frustration into constructive energy, but we must. The attorneys who argue our cases, our families and supporters, and the abolitionists who strive to end the death penalty must continually take that bitter taste and use it to drive them onward. Do not lose focus or get distracted for what tomorrow may hold, for there is sufficient evil to fight in this day. Fight the 'right now' fight.

I have to share some other sad news, our Executive Director of over 17 years has been forced to step down due to her health, and though she has recovered somewhat, she has handed the reins over to our new Executive Director, Britta Slopianka. We are truly blessed to have both of these women at the helm. Every effort has been made to ensure that we continue to move forward. With many thanks to our supporters, we urge you all to bear with us, to not lose heart, and most importantly; Keep Hope Alive!!

Sincerely,

Vice-Chairman/Editor  
Bart Johnson

**Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People**

## MILK TO MEAT. CHOOSE MEAT

A good friend of mine asked me to reflect about Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty. I must admit, I was very reluctant to write this article. I have nothing against Project Hope, it's just after 27 years being here on Alabama's death row, my words are few, and that passion I once had is not what it used to be. If I had to define the way I feel right now, it would be simply, "Tired!" But for the benefit of Project Hope. A sleeping giant now awakes.

My name is Willie B. Smith. Some of the fellows here have given me so many names. Butterbean, W.S.l., and Money. Each of these names carries deep significant meanings. Butterbean makes me laugh the most because when I first got here, I was skinnier than a toothpick. Now I look like a whale trying to make its way back to water. I said this to give the reader a more clear picture to smile, but more importantly to know that death row is a family, and if giving me names provides even a little laughter, then I don't mind at all.

The ride from Birmingham to here was a very long drive. There were times when the Sheriffs stopped at a traffic light I would duck down to keep from being stared at. When I was younger and my mom was driving, police cars would stop by us. I used to look to see who was back there and often wonder where they were going, but my biggest wonder, what did they do? Now, instead of doing the staring, I was being stared at.

I arrived here at William C. Holman correctional facility, and was placed in a holding cell that I later found out was called "receiving." A white man processed me in, and this man had one of the nicest attitudes I ever met. I looked at his name tag and it said Mr. Earl. And if I had to define Mr. Earl, it would be Humanity at its best. I'm glad that it was around feeding time. He gave me a tray. I forget the contents on it. It didn't matter, I was extremely hungry after an almost four hour long drive.

After spending some time in receiving, Mr. Earl awoke me to give me a piece of paper. It said Z-541, and your cell will be 8D-4. He said Mr. Smith get ready to be moved. I said "OK Sir."

The officers handcuffed me. Other inmates were in the hallway and the officer yelled at the top of his lungs "Clear the Hall Death Row inmate!! The inmates got off the hall. I couldn't believe what I just saw and heard. But I didn't know at the time that death row inmates couldn't be near population inmates.

I was then brought to my cell and boy when that door slammed. It said something. It was more than a slam, it was reality. It was something I'd been running from. Now I was trapped. I had to face it.

I kept reminding myself what my lawyer said, how we'd win on appeal and that I wouldn't be on death row that long. I found out later that the nurses were trying to help me, not hurt me.

continued...



After coming back from the infirmary, I saw a care package on my bunk. It had what appeared to be a paper with Wings of Hope on it, some food, hygiene, and stationery. Reminded by the stories I was told in the county jail, my first thought was to find me something nice and sharp to defend whatever came my way. My mind was made up.

The next day an older man was passing out trays and juice. He introduced himself to me and began to give me a rundown about death row. I asked him about the care package and he said, no youngster "do not think like that!" That package is from a group called Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty. "Their intentions are to help you, but most importantly to let you know that you're not alone!" I said OK, but still kept my eyes opened.

For some reason I noticed every Wednesday an officer would say get ready for the Project Hope meeting. I also would hear muttering from other guys. "Man damn project hope, all they want is your money and stamps!" Right then, my mind was tainted.

In this place you will be offered two different types of portions. Milk or Meat. I must admit that I chose milk for a very long time. Although wisdom tells us that we must crawl before we walk, which is very true. I advise the ones who come after me to choose meat. Your life is at stake. So you might not have that chance to crawl like I did.

When drinking milk you have these type of attitudes. You believe that since you're in the early stages of your appeals that you're safe, and even worse, better than the next man. I had this type of thinking not being aware of it.

Sometimes I ask myself, How many men did I help the state kill? Yes, that's right, I said it. How many did I help the state kill?

Project Hope goes far and beyond to get the word out to our families and friends to get involved. But in our own foolishness and choosing to drink milk, we ignore their pleas. I remember times going to visitation, a guy who had an execution date would sit with him. My mother would say "Jr", isn't that the guy I saw on the news who had a date? Yes mama, but stop staring.

If you truly pay attention to the questions your family and friends ask. They're really asking about you. They're really putting your face on the guy that they see, and whatever you feed them, that's what they eat. They're really seeking information. And when you lie back and do nothing, you might as well help the state. Because here's the eye opener. If you stay here long enough, somebody else's mama might be asking about you.

continued...

When you decide to eat meat, you will hear these responses. I wrote the Governor, I called the Senator, I voted. Because you now realize that saving them is saving you.

Project Hope is worth getting involved in. When I began to eat meat, I understood the haters who downed Project Hope. Sometimes when you give up, your only cry is negativity. And anything positive hurts.

Some of those men have been executed, but before they died, Project Hope held meetings and asked how could they help, and asked us to contact family and friends to help. I did. I stand, and will always stand for Project Hope. Now the Sleeping giant will go back to sleep.

Willie B. Smith



#### THE SILENCE SPEAKS

2019 this year has started in a unique but unfamiliar fashion. We have grown accustomed to chaos and confusion. This country was founded and established with violence. Yet it was civilized and re-established on the principles of God's law. So we're used to the hearing of certain noise. That noise could be heard here on the Row. Yet this year there has been an unusual silence, here as well as in some of the courts, and that silence is speaking louder than the familiar noise.

The State of Alabama has found itself among the nation's elite. The State of Alabama made a steady ascent to be among the nation's leaders in not only imposing the death penalty, but carrying out executions as well. In the late 90's the state reached the apex of carrying out executions, on average they were executing at least four people per year. Even with all of this going on there was a secrecy surrounding the death penalty I only figured out when I became incarcerated. So the noise surrounding the death penalty back in those days was silenced to me.

Silence in executions can be a horrible thing. Take lethal injection for example, the goal for silencing the pain of the lethal dosage was supposed to be hidden. Yet some inmates weren't properly anaesthetized, and the pain of the poison coursing through their veins would reveal the anguish the drugs were causing. The State of Alabama would like to use the silence as an avenue, as an opportunity to keep the opponents of the death penalty from speaking out against the death penalty. Though executions have been on a steady decline in the past twenty years, it's not a time to be silent. Now is the time to continue to speak out and oppose the death penalty.

Jeffery Lee



## UNTITLED

Civilization rests on the principle that we treat our criminals better than they treated their victims, That we as civilized people not stoop to their level.

That's no longer true, now we treat criminals the same as they treated their victims. Well, not all criminals, just the ones that have killed someone.

Did you know that in Iran the victim's family can stop the execution any time they wish to? "It's part of the Qisas!" All they have to do is forgive the killer.

Do we as a civilization not have the same principle anymore? Are civilized people that savage where executions are okay? Or maybe we're all just outliers playing at being civilized, and the savages are the true holders of civilization.

Jessie M.D.Y. Phillips



## GRASPING FOR STRAWS

Much of the Bible has been left up to interpretation which has allowed many people to take scripture out of context and twist it to their own personal agendas. The word of God is being grossly misused. A prime example of this is a recent statement made by Wyoming's representative, Lynn Hutchins.

"The greatest man who ever lived died via the death penalty, for you and me. Governments were instituted to execute justice. If it wasn't for Jesus dying via the death penalty, we would all have no hope," said Hutchins

I don't know what Bible this woman was taught from, but Jesus did not die so that we may die, but so that we may live. Jesus did not die as an innocent man in order to give us an example that executing innocent people is a necessary evil or that it's acceptable, but so that we may live despite our sins, shortcomings, mistakes, or bad decisions.

The support of the death penalty is rapidly on the decline, and its supporters are grasping at straws. Seems they're losing hope, and potential votes. For reasons such as the Nonsense Rep. Hutchins spewed out of her mouth, church and state was always supposed to be separated. Stop grasping at straws with intelligent people, and face the facts... the death penalty is a barbaric practice that has to end.

Castro

## "MASKS"

Don't be fooled by people. Don't be fooled by the faces they wear, for they wear a "mask", a thousand "masks", "masks" that they are afraid to take off & keep on purposely. They give the impression that they are secure & that all is sunny from within. That confidence is their name & coolness is their game. That the waters are calm & that they are in command, & that they need no one. But don't believe them. The surface may seem smooth but their surface is a "mask", forever changing & being concealed. Beneath lies confusion, fear, & loneliness. But they hide this. They don't want anybody to know it. They panic at the thought of their weaknesses being exposed. That's why they frantically create "masks" to hide behind, a nonchalant, sophisticated facade to help them pretend, to shield them from the glance that knows. But such a glance is precisely their salvation & their only hope, & they know it. That is, if it's followed by love & acceptance.

It's the only thing that can liberate them from themselves, from their own self built prison walls. It's the important thing that will assure them of what they can't assure themselves, that they're really worth something. But they don't tell you this. They don't dare to. They're afraid that your glance won't be followed by love & acceptance. They're afraid that you'll think less of them. They're afraid that deep down they're nothing & that you will see this and reject them. So they play the game, a desperate pretending game, with a facade of assurance without & like a trembling child within. And with that begins the empty parade of "masks" & their life becomes a front. They often ramble on in the suave tones of surface talk. They tell you everything that's really nothing, & nothing of what's everything, of what's crying from within them. So when they're going through the routine, do not be fooled by what they're saying. But listen carefully & try to hear what they're not saying, what they'd like to be able to say, what for survival needs to be said, but what they feel can't be said.

It's known that some people don't like hiding or playing superficial phony games. They want to be genuine & spontaneous but they need help in doing that. They need the voices of experience & encouragement even when it's the last thing they seem to want. Regardless of the down side of the "masks" being worn, there is always a positive side for those who wear them, as well as for those who face life's tests with character, patience & perseverance. And the positive to always be remembered is that trials keep you strong, sorrows keep you human, failures keep you humble & success keeps you glowing. But above all, faith keeps you going!

Anonymous