

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

On Wings of Hope

Volume 23 Issue III

July - Sept. 2019

Project Hope



*Execute
Justice
Not
People*

MILESTONES

In every life there are milestones, special events which mark our journey, events which will never be forgotten. These milestones, whether happy or sad make us pause to reflect on how we reached them. The same could be said about the life of an organization and as we celebrated milestones during this year we would like to reflect a little on what they mean to us and how we reached them.

The first milestone I would like for us to focus on is the article by Freelance Journalist Lauren Gill on our organization in The Nation. Can you believe that our small organization with its Chairman and all of its Board on Holman's death row except for one Board Member in the free world could be seen as important enough to be chosen for that? Yes, it was definitely a milestone and we wished that you could have seen the pride and delight this generated at Holman, also among the officers with who it was proudly shared.

And then came the next milestone, a book of our writings previously published in our newsletter Wings of Hope compiled by our amazing Advisory Board Member Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy of the University of North Alabama and to be printed by Vanderbilt University Press. And if that were not enough, our being able to participate in an exhibit with our writings and our voices, yes our recorded voices!

These are certainly milestones that invite reflection. We look back over our 30 years and remember our founders who had a dream which they realized and which we are still realizing. We look back on all the steps that marked our progress and there are so many of those. We remember with sorrow those we have lost who are part of our phadp family for ever and who contributed so much to allow us to reach these milestones. We are filled with gratitude that they too will now be remembered. And yes, all those steps taken by so many of us, steps taken despite temptations to give up, steps taken despite all that surrounds us, day after day after day. And finally we reflect with gratitude and thank Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy and freelance journalist Lauren Gill for seeing in us the courage to persevere and the willingness to always take another step so that we can reach the next milestone!

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.

NATIONAL OFFICE:

P.O. Box 1362, Lanett, AL 36863

Email: beesther@earthlink.net

Web: www.phadp.org

Email group: [phadp-mail-subscribe](mailto:phadp-mail-subscribe@earthlink.net)

@yahoo.com, also on Face Book:

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty in Alabama

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

Hello Everyone,

Well, it seems that we have made it through another round of scorching summer months to finally reach the best season of them all...NO not fall...football! Yes, it's that time of year again. The time when fans will proudly shout their support for their favorite team from the rooftops. They will don the apparel, display the paraphernalia, and trash talk like they're getting paid for it. For those hours on game day the stress and troubles of the world are set aside. No thoughts of mass killings, or legislatures who prefer to advocate for the accused to receive the death penalty, rather than working to pass legislation to make it more difficult for the weapons used to be acquired. No thoughts of the opioid epidemic that is leading to overdose after overdose, and has gripped this country in its clutches, or of the Ohio legislator (Rep. Scott Wiggam) who has made the asinine suggestion to use fentanyl seized in drug raids as a means to execute death row inmates. He does know that's what's called evidence in the drug cases which would more than likely result from those drug raids, right? There are also no thoughts of the 166 Death Row Exonerates (and counting), or that Texas just executed another innocent man (and counting). No thoughts of Gary Drinkard being exonerated but not compensated... well not until he brings the real perpetrator to justice, as Alabama says he has to do. No thoughts of Alabama using taxpayer money to hire a company in Tennessee (FDR Safety) for its potential testimony to try to help keep Alabama's machinery of death up and running,

(continued...)

or of Alabama trying to circumvent the Freedom of Information Act at every turn. The thoughts for those hours, for game day will be tailgating, friends, and family, the professional trash talking, and the game itself. After all of that, and we have to return to the reality of what is really going on in this world, and at some point start to really take a hard look at ourselves, and ask the questions... What are we doing??? Not who, but what are we becoming as a society???

I wish everyone a great football season, hopefully your team will do good...except for that one team (those who know me know exactly who I mean :) Be Blessed, and Be the Other Voice.

In Solidarity,

Anthony Boyd
Chairman PHADP



STILL THE OTHER VOICE

This is from Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy: "Darrell Grayson, former chairman of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty, and who was refused DNA testing by the state of Alabama to prove his innocence, was executed in 2007. He was an incredible poet-one of the best I have ever read." His poem *Ghosts over the Boiler* was submitted by Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy and accepted by Poetry Magazine, one of the oldest and most prestigious poetry journals in the nation and will appear in their special issue, Poetry in the Age of Mass Incarceration. A recording of Darrell reading this poem up on our website has also been accepted.

Darrell Grayson's poems were first published by his good friend Dr. Dale Wisely in 2005 by Mercy Press. Darrell's poetry, which he described as "a contagion of insecurities" appeared also in Axis of Logic, Birmingham Arts Journal, Right Hand Pointing, Wings of Hope and Southern Fiction on line. We are grateful to all who made it possible that Darrell is now acknowledged as ranking among the best poets in this country. We were privileged to work with you and to have you as our dear friend. We thank you for still BEING THE OTHER VOICE!

Esther

Alabama News

Third Quarter 2019

- * Emanuel Gissendanner was released in June after serving 18 years for a crime he did not commit. After being granted a new trial by the Alabama Supreme Court due to his trial counsel's failure to investigate and adequately defend him. The state offered a deal for time served in exchange for an Alford plea. We wish him well on his new start.
- * On August 2, the state withdrew a request for an execution date for Jarrod Taylor after it was determined that he had opted for nitrogen hypoxia, a method that Alabama has not developed.
- * The Annual Alabama Arise Conference will once again be held at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Montgomery on September 7th. We are grateful to have Federal Defenders for the Middle District of Alabama representing our issue there.
- * A special issue of Poetry Magazine entitled Poetry in the Age of Mass Incarceration will include the poem "Ghosts Over the Boiler" written by former PHADP Chairman Darrell Grayson.
- * More great news from Advisory Board member Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy includes an advance book deal with Vanderbilt University Press for the collection of PHADP writings, an opportunity to display and present her work with our organization at the UNA library, and the inclusion of Bryan Stevenson's book "Just Mercy" as required reading for all incoming freshmen.
- * We have been fortunate to work with Wayne Verry, head of the Prison Commission of the Episcopalian Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast this summer, and we look forward continued collaboration in the future.
- * We have written a letter to media outlets urging them to investigate the costs of the death penalty in Alabama, compared to life without parole. We believe that if people knew the cost they might reconsider support for state killings.

HOW TO HAVE A SAY

While Facebook groups and online petitions can generate buzz about an issue, nothing works better than contacting lawmakers personally. Email is often easy to ignore (just look at the junk in your own inbox), and some activists say a phone call works better.

Lawmakers often hold public hearings on bills, in which anyone can come to speak if they're willing to drive to Montgomery and sign up as a speaker. To find committee meetings with public hearings, go to <http://www.legislature.state.al.us> and click on "meetings and announcements."

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and all the information included.

Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is Anthony Boyd. I am the Chairman of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty (PHADP). I have enclosed a brief biography of our organization. We are reaching out to you for two reasons. First, to congratulate you on the positive ruling in the lethal injection drug protocol lawsuit, in the pursuit of state transparency concerning Alabama's death penalty. Although it is still being appealed, the effort in the name of informing the people has to be acknowledged. That leads me to the other reason we are reaching out to you.

Alabama has never examined the cost or the effectiveness of its death penalty. Other states have, and have concluded that it is far more expensive to execute people than to incarcerate them indefinitely. Just as the citizens of Alabama have a right to know the state's execution protocol, they also have a right to know how much of their tax money is being spent on the death penalty as a whole. Money that could, and should, be put to better use benefiting the people of Alabama. Money that should be spent on a failing education system, on hiring more police officers, better equipment and training for those officers, expanding job opportunities, caring for the homeless and mentally ill, and fixing the crumbling infrastructure of this state. These are just a few examples of more useful ways to spend taxpayer dollars, other than bringing death.

As more and more states are moving away from the barbarism of the death penalty, numerous reasons are given for doing so, and the cost of the archaic practice is very high on that list.

Why has Alabama never done a cost study of its death penalty?

As the group Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty pointed out in a recent news article, "cost and innocence" are major concerns with the death penalty. Note that cost came first in that statement.

In Pennsylvania, state Rep. Christopher Rabb, D-Philadelphia Co. listed 5 reasons why the death penalty in Pennsylvania should be repealed, and at the top of that list was cost: one is the expense: the 3 most recent executions in Pennsylvania (in the '90's) cost taxpayers \$816 million. It is estimated death penalty cases cost \$2 million more than non-death penalty cases. Although cost was at the top of the list, there other points listed that require mentioning: the death penalty is not a deterrent (which everyone knows), homicide rates in states with the death penalty are about 18% higher than those without the death penalty, and the death penalty disproportionately hammers the poor.

In Florida, according to a survey on SupremeCourt.gov, enforcing the death penalty costs \$51 million more than it would cost to punish all first-degree murders with life in prison without parole.

According to WIFX (Fox 4) the Florida Bar Association's website found that as of January 2018, Florida had about 390 people on death row, which represents about \$9.36 billion in taxpayer spending.

We believe that the taxpayers of Alabama deserve to know how high the cost is to continue pursuing the ultimate punishment in their state.

We hope that you agree and can work to reveal the cost to them.

Letter From PHADP to Alabama Media Contacts
seeking to reveal the costs of the death penalty.

American Justice

Sometimes I can be a slow learner. I just came to a realization that has me feeling like that now...

The justice system, especially here in Alabama, does not care at all if you are guilty or innocent of a crime. If you were properly arrested, tried, and convicted, that's all that matters. And once you reach that point, the only thing that can save your life is if the state (D.A., Judge, etc.) made a serious error during that process, or if a law is changed or created that works in your favor.

After being sentenced to death, in the eyes of the state, you are guilty, even if you are actually innocent. It then becomes a slippery slope because the state looks for every opportunity to shorten your appeals and kill you...Even if they have to bend or break the laws to do it.

The deck is stacked, the odds are grossly in the state's favor, as we sit here wishing, hoping, and playing that the injustices will be corrected, and that we'll eventually be treated fairly. This is the American Justice system! This is how it operates! I was foolish to believe that the truth mattered in my trial. When you live in a "tough on crime" state, you can get ready because there will be people who are innocent, or not guilty of a charge quite as serious as a capital offense being locked up, over sentenced, and killed at the hands of the state. I can't believe it took me 30 years to have my eyes opened.

Nicholas Smith



Divided We Stand

Divided we stand! Why? Mass shootings at a all time high in the so called "free world." If it were black men causing these tragedies "profiling" would turn to slavery (as it already is). A white man commits a horrible thing towards humanity and the government looks for a mental health defense to appease the situation. But a black man gets murdered by the government gang "police" they look for the criminal history of the victim, "that's crazy!) AmeriKKKa has always and will always be "profit before people---" When will we "the people" recognize this? Animal life is cherished more than human life. AmeriKKKa kills its own citizens, calls them domestic terrorists all in the name of justice, really? Abuse a dog and they wanna euthanize you! "Help my white son, he is a drug addict." "Incarcerate the black man, he has the same problem." Do you shake your head (as I) at this foolishness of politricks, capitalism, and the new slave era before you?

Slave plantations are steadily being built (prisons) for what? Divided we stand!

On The Wings Of Hope



**To treat life as less than a miracle
is to give up on it.**

Wendell Berry

A Christian Perspective

Produced By
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty



God
&
Love



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
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For more information
about Project Hope to
Abolish the Death Penalty,
write to:
PHADP, P.O. Box 1362
Lanett, AL 36863

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Greetings Friends and Family,

I want to begin by expressing gratitude for our many partners, both old and new, for making the efforts that they have to elevate and amplify our voice on the outside.

The encouragement that comes from having people in your corner makes the heat of the fight, as well as the heat of the summer, more bearable.

I also feel compelled to pay each of our members on life row on the back for staying focused and motivated. Seeing them grow and take initiative and utilize their talents is uplifting, and downright inspiring.

It always feels like Alabama will be one of the last holdouts when it comes to capital punishment. But we know we don't have to do it all at once, and that every small step is progress. So thank you to everyone who helps us take each new step.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:" and the next 7 verses go on to give us some examples to help us understand that there will be seasons of toil and seasons of victory, and that we should not expect every season to be full of sunny days, but to set our hearts on eternity (v:11) and trust that though we go through many seasons, God is using each of them to grow and shape us for His plan and purpose in our life. So as we have our wins and losses in courts, in legislatures, and even in the media, we're trusting God to do His part while we endeavor to stay humble, obedient, and faithful servants.

Yours in Christ,

Bart Johnson
Vice-Chairman PHADP



Dear Anthony,

First of all, thank you for your letter! I do appreciate you reaching out to me, and for the PHADP letter, the PHADP information sheet, and your outreach suggestions. I shared all of this with my fellow Prison Commission members last week, and everyone was deeply moved by your words.

Secondly, as you see I've taken the liberty of addressing you as "Anthony", and ask that you call me "Wayne" (Brothers in Christ can do that). As a bit of background, I grew up in RI, served 24 years in the US Coast Guard, married a "Suth'in Belle" and moved to Foley in 2002, and have been an Episcopalian all my life.

I must admit that I first read about PHADP in Anthony Ray Hopkins inspiring autobiography *The Sun Does Shine*, but I didn't pursue it further until I (indirectly) contacted Esther – which led to your letter to me. Now that we have made contact, I want to both keep you posted, and seek your thoughts and advice as the Prison Commission proceeds on this mission to end capital punishment.

I don't know how much you know about the Episcopal Church. We have Bishops and Priests and Deacons, but it is not an authoritative structure like the Pope and Bishops of the Catholic Church. Our individual churches are the foundation and source of our decisions and actions, and the Priests in charge have significant freedom of choice and action. The churches are organized in regions called Dioceses, and my church in Foley is in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, which includes the churches south of Montgomery, and from the MS border to the middle of the FL panhandle. Our Prison Commission is a Diocesan-level activity, which means we deal with churches and prisons in both AL and FL – a rather unique challenge. I currently serve as Chairman of the Commission.

Every three years, the Episcopal Church holds a National Convention, attended by both clergy and lay people from every Diocese in the USA. During the Convention last year, the members passed a Resolution calling for the nationwide repeal of the Death Penalty, which is the document that has led me to writing to you. This isn't the first time the Episcopalians have done this – a similar Resolution was passed at a National Convention in 1958. The tragic fact that we passed another one in 2018 summarizes our lack of success over the past 60 years.

As the members of our Commission proceed, we must bear in mind that while the Church passed the Resolution, not everyone in the Church agrees with it. We've taken an initial step by developing a Bible Study based on *The Sun Does Shine*, which enables church members to consider the injustice of our legal system without directly addressing the Death Penalty. Several churches have conducted the Study, and have had positive comments about it.

Our Commission reports to the Diocesan Bishop, a very good man named Russell Kendrick. He will soon be sending a letter in support of the Resolution to all 62 churches in the Diocese, which we hope will encourage our church families to prayerfully consider our efforts to help them understand the necessity of repealing this atrocity. I have also reached out to the Diocese of Alabama, which has its own Bishop and includes the Alabama churches north of our Diocese, so (hopefully) the Episcopal Church can speak as one voice in the State.

Enough for now. My main purpose in writing today has been to thank you for your letter, introduce myself, and put the Resolution into context. As we proceed with our interaction with the church families, we will look for ways to introduce and implement the suggestions you have made in your letter. They are excellent ideas, and we need to support them.

Please write me anytime, and PLEASE feel free to let me know if there's something that we can do differently or better. And please know that people whom you do not know are praying for you and all those on Death Row, both here in Alabama and elsewhere.

May God's Peace be with you.

Sincerely,



Letter from Wayne Verry,
Chairman of the Prison Commission
for the Episcopal Diocese of the
Central Gulf Coast.

Speak, I'm Listening

Last year was a tough year for me, I was believing God for a miracle, but it didn't come to fruition, and as a result I almost gave up on my faith walk.

Jesus taught his followers a parable about the importance and persistence of prayer from St. Luke 18. In verse one he makes a statement that believers always ought to pray (to ask, inquire, request, wish for, demand) and not to lose heart in God.

In verse eight of this same chapter, Jesus asked the crowd of people a very important question, which was, "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith in God?" (conviction, confidence, reliance, trustworthiness, persuasion) on earth?"

This analogy about prayer fits me to a "T" :) I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day. I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came each task, why doesn't God help me? I wondered. He answered, you didn't ask. I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on dreary and dismal. I wondered why God didn't show me, He said but you didn't seek.

I tried to come into God's presence, I used all my keys in the lock, God gently and lovingly chided, my child you didn't knock.

I woke up early this morning, and paused before beginning my day. I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray.

May the goodness of the Lord be upon you all, Amen!

Earl "Pete" McGahee

Z-466 / H-18

Is This Who We Are?

What is it that makes us human? Our ability to rationalize and reason is part of what makes us human beings. How we respond to someone in need, do we offer our help, or do we choose to do nothing. Helping people in times of distress is a quality of humans. Even some animals have the ability to help each other when one is in trouble. Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty was birthed from the distress of a man on death row that was facing execution. So even with facing death themselves, the founding fathers of PHADP chose to reach out and help. This is who we are!

The climate of the culture we live in the world doesn't always go out of their way to offer help to those in need of help. It's a breaking news story when the simple act of kindness is shown to someone, Yet we're considered leaders of countries around the world. Even when our country is becoming more and more violent, our answer to violence is still the same, if you kill you should be killed. So we're constantly sowing violence and killing, and that's one of the reasons we're reaping violence and killing. Be not mocked as a man soweth that he will also reap. This law isn't only a man's law, it is a law of the land. That is who we are!

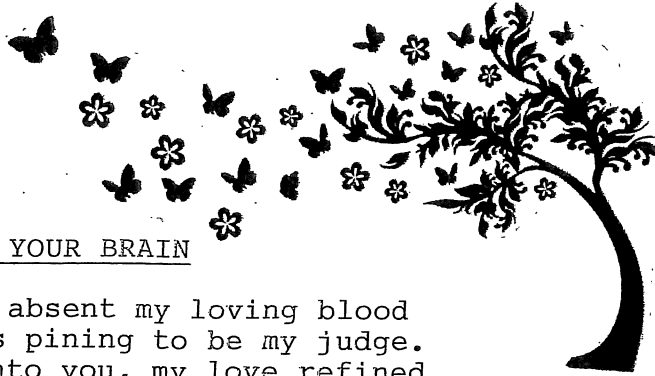
When we choose to respond to anything in a peaceful manner, more than likely the results will be peaceful. Yet we're making the same mistakes over and over again. This is insanity because we're trying to obtain a different result by doing the same thing. The reason I'm against the death penalty isn't because I'm on death row. It's because I'm against death even though I've been convicted of murder. Even with so much death in the world, we claim to have life in our hearts. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. So are we a country of people who have love for others or are we what we're seeing happening? I'm still persuaded that what we're seeing happening is not who we are!

Jeffery Lee

Untitled

It's been hard for me to write lately. Have you ever had your mind full but empty at the same time? Seeing so many things going on in my community and not being able to do anything about it. Seeing all the young men lost and making some of the same choices I made. Have me to the point where my thoughts and ideas start to seem vain to me! Not being able to carry them out. But I choose daily to hope, and not only hope, but believe that I will get a chance to be healing to my community. So I want to declare to all the countries and states that continue to kill the potential to heal their communities and nations, through their revengeful, political, and inhuman justice system. That there is life, there is potential, there is LOVE, there are solutions, there are great minds on your death rows!!! So stop killing the solutions, stop killing the potential. Stop killing, killing the true resources!!

Gamal Jackson



APPLY YOUR BRAIN

Defend your day absent my loving blood
Not as strangers pining to be my judge.
Then peace be unto you, my love refined
See me and slip hearts together in torturous climes.

We make much of love, this mysterious thing,
It binds us blood, desires and dreams
So i beseech you, fingers bound to cliffs
To make forgiveness a bridge over poisonous rifts.

Come dance in the brutal light of my day
And apply your brain in temperance way, here
Where animals pillage and play
The cage doors are open, enjoy your stay!

Darrell B. Grayson



Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty
P.O. Box 1362, Lanett, AL 36863
Tel: 334 499 0003
beesther@earthlink.net • www.phadp.org



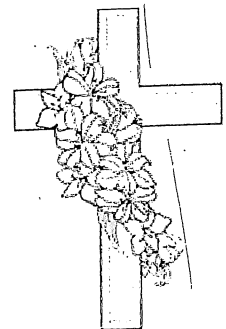
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty is an interfaith 501 C 3 organization whose mission is to educate and mobilize communities to act to abolish the death penalty in Alabama. PHADP relies on YOU for support. Suggested donations: \$25/individual, \$40/household, and \$100/congregation, or whatever 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".

No Retaliation

As He watched from the Highest of highs, and the clearest of clear, viewing rooms, before Him an execution was taking place. Three men at once, but His attentions were on the man in the middle. The man's arms stretched out on both sides of Him, held there by nails. Legs stretched out beneath Him, as if they were reaching for stable ground, held in place also with nails. Thorns puncturing the halo of His head. The one watching, THE FATHER. The innocent man (free of any sins) being executed, THE SON. The execution, not botched, just occurring during barbaric times. (You would think, in a modern society, we as a people would've moved away from such barbarism.) A stay of execution, clemency, and even freedom from being executed His, as His Father is the Almighty. However, this is what He came here for. To die for our sins. So, His Father watched. He could've sought revenge. He could've retaliated. He could've not sent His Son to His death... for our sins! However, He did send Him, and He watched from His own viewing room, as His only Begotten Son was teased, ridiculed, tortured, and murdered (executed) by self-serving politicians, who had prodded the masses into becoming a blood lusting mob. He allowed His Son to go through all of that for the purposes of teaching, and wiping our slates clean. However, some just didn't get it (and still don't). Love, compassion, understanding, mercy, and forgiveness - All a part of His intended teachings, but what He got instead was, mere mortals pretending to be God. Mere mortals pretending to be Him. The Father, who watched His Son (an innocent man) executed, and the only one capable of the ultimate punishment, the ultimate revenge, the ultimate retaliation... FORGAVE!!! The Son, the innocent victim hanging there on the cross (his time periods electric chair, lethal injection gurney, gas chamber, and firing squad) preparing Himself to meet His destiny, turns to one of the true criminals on each side of Him, as the man says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest unto thy Kingdom," and He says in return, "Verily, I say to thee today shalt thou be with me in paradise." HE FORGAVE!!!

Three men on crosses, two criminals, and one man innocent of not just any crimes, but innocent of any sins, period! Do you stick with the saying, "Well, we got two criminals off the streets?" Do you continue to play God, and seek your own brand of vengeance, your own brand of injustice (retaliation)? Or is it far past the time that the intended lessons were learned (not the ones made up to serve your own needs and purposes)?

Anthony Boyd
N-9



Don't
be AFRAID.
Just **STAND**
where you are
and **WATCH.**
and you will see
the *Wonderful*
way the LORD will
RESCUE you today.
Exodus 14:13