

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

# On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



VOLUME 25 ISSUE 1

Jan - Mar 2021

**Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People**

**IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE BEFORE THE LAW**

Do you like that saying? I think we can agree that you do because you certainly like to use it a whole lot. And how about the one that says that "the buck stops here"? Another good one, don't you think because it makes you out to be a responsible individual. And you know what? We are in agreement on that one as well and so now the stage is set for what I hope will be an honest trial of the Governor, the Attorney General, District Attorneys and Prosecutors by an Alabama tax payer, yours truly.

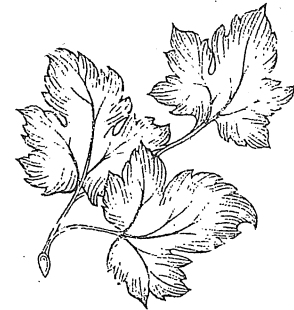
Believing that on the whole I am a reasonably fair minded individual just like you all think you are I will give you the opportunity to plead guilty to the charges and accept a sentence of retirement for life from all things judicial.

And so here are the charges and let me know how you plead:

- 1) Reckless endangerment of life by seeking the death penalty.
- 2) Failure to provide qualified defense attorneys for the trial and attorneys for post conviction representation.
- 3) Failure to supervise state appointed attorneys.
- 4) Racism
- 5) Failure to provide qualified psychiatric representation.
- 6) Failure to keep up to date in developmental delayed findings.

In order to fully explore number 4 we would have to write a book to highlight all the aspects of how racism taints every judicial proceeding from start to finish. I understand that this is the charge you will find hardest to acknowledge because you like to think of yourself as fair-minded. So how about if I offer you one more saying to help you plead guilty to at least the charge of racism "The truth shall set you free". I promise you that once you have done that understanding the true nature of justice will follow and who knows I might just commute your sentence to time served for good behavior!

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**

Hello Everyone,

I hope this finds all of you continuing to stay strong despite the ongoing trying times. Hopefully, all of you continue to be resilient in the new year as we all had to be in the past year. As it's always darkest before the dawn, positivity will shine through and guide us all.

As we all know, the state of Alabama tried desperately to execute Willie Smith on Feb. 11, 2021, but thankfully their efforts were to no avail. We would like to thank everyone for giving Willie, his family, and us your support. To everyone who participated in the vigils, thank you. Your efforts, support, and continued fight are very much appreciated. However, the fight is not over. The state of Alabama, who argued so expertly that Willie's Spiritual Advisor could not be allowed in the execution chamber during the execution because of security reasons, has all of a sudden changed its execution protocol to allow his Spiritual Advisor into the execution chamber. What happened to the great threat to security?! Why even have laws and protocols when they are constantly circumvented to appease the personal and political agendas of career motivated politicians! When the overseers of the laws start to skirt, circumvent, and outright break their own laws, there can be no confidence in a system that is supposed to be bound by a blind woman, who is only supposed to be guided by her morality, fairness, and sense of justice for ALL! The death penalty has to end, and the way to make that happen is to change the overseers.

(continued...)



We cannot expect to rid our society of such an antiquated and barbaric punishment when the overseers of the system themselves are of an antiquated and barbaric mindset. Change has to come! Change will come!

We continue to be contacted by new people wanting to volunteer their time, effort, and dedication to our organization to help further our fight against the death penalty. We continue to be contacted by new organizations looking to stand with us and fight alongside us. Change is coming! We thank every new person and organization that has reached out to us, because it's going to take just that... A coming together. We need all of you and we're thankful to have you. We need politicians to not just say they are fighting with us, but we need them to get in the fight! Now is the time to push! Now is the time for all anti-death penalty organizations to come together, and push the death penalty out of our society, out of existence, and relegate the antiquated and barbaric punishment back to the olden times from which it came.

Judicial execution can never cancel or remove the atrocity it seeks to punish; it can only add a second atrocity to the original one. So long as one sees killing as wrong, there is no need to waste time with the deterrent argument, since it would be nonsense to try to prevent a theoretical evil in the future by perpetrating an actual one in the present -Auberon Waugh, 20th century British author and journalist.

To all who continue to contact us, I have to let you know that our Executive Director is the hardest working woman in show business.(smile) We are so very thankful and blessed to have her. With that said, as she directs you to me, please feel free to contact me as I try very hard to take some of her work off of her very full plate. Thank you!

Be safe, take care, stay strong, be blessed, and continue to be the other voice!

ex animo (from the heart)  
In Solidarity,

Anthony Boyd  
Chairman, PHADP

**Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People**



“Darkness cannot drive out  
darkness; only light can do that.  
Hate cannot drive out hate;  
only love can do that.”

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. // American  
minister and civil rights activist

ALABAMA NEWS

First Quarter 2021

\* Willie B. Smith III was scheduled to be executed on Feb 11th. We are elated to say that this execution did not happen. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit put an injunction in place barring the state from executing Mr. Smith without his spiritual advisor present, and at around 11 o'clock pm on the night of the 11th, the Supreme Court refused the state's request to lift that injunction. The warrant for Mr. Smith expired at midnight. Willie Smith is alive and in good spirits considering the circumstances.

\* Subsequent to the failed attempt to execute Willie Smith, without his spiritual advisor present, the state of Alabama has altered its execution protocol to allow the condemned men access to the comfort of a spiritual advisor as he is killed.

\* In December, the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals vacated the death sentence of Lionel Francis, saying that the aggravating circumstance of a previous misdemeanor conviction in North Dakota could not be used. Mr. Francis has been resentenced and processed off of death row.

\* Our Executive Director, Esther Brown, has participated in and contributed to numerous virtual "zoom" conferences, including with the NAACP, Alabama ARISE, and Death Penalty Action. Even in the midst of a pandemic she continues to fight tirelessly to call attention to the injustices of the death penalty. Both here in Alabama and at the federal level.

\* In addition to these important conferences, Executive Director Esther Brown also helped organize and shared messages from the board at Holman to Willie Smith on a virtual vigil hosted by Death Penalty Action. Thank you to all who participated, or were present, your support is greatly appreciated.

\* The Death Penalty Information Center has revealed 11 "new" exonerations, including one from Alabama, Charles Lee Bufford. This brings the total number of people exonerated and freed from death rows in the U.S. since 1973 to 185.

\* James McWilliams, originally sentenced in 1986, has been resentenced to life without parole, following a 2017 Supreme Court ruling in his favor.



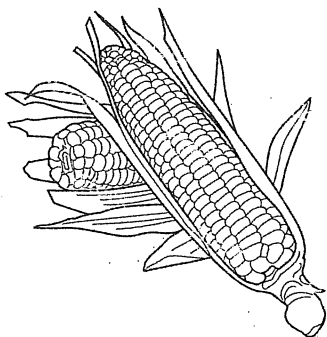
THE ART OF SURVIVAL

During the past very difficult 12 months many articles have been written on this topic by writers more skilled than I am and so you might wonder what I could possibly have to add that could be different. I understand you wondering just as I wondered when I read the various articles on this topic however one of the fascinating facts about life is that although we share similar events our approach to them will always be unique because we all are that, unique! So what we add will also be unique.

Does our uniqueness mean that we cannot learn from the experience of others? Fortunately no it does not mean that and so for years at "Holman's House" *Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl has been recommended reading. We read Victor Frankl's thoughts on surviving concentration camp, find that they make sense also in our situation and then do our best to apply them to our lives in our unique way as the individuals we are with our unique talents. What are our talents you might wonder? Some of us are organizers, some are writers, some are poets, artists and some of us may even feel that we have no particular talent. And yet we do and I would like to call it a very important one, the talent of loving kindness.

Why are these talents so important and how do they help us to survive? One could say that they open doors, even our cell doors, as they connect us to a meaning larger than ourselves. And that is so important because nothing is more toxic than perseveration on self, sitting on that pity pot and feeling there is nothing else in the world but our pain. It is not that our pain of loss is not real, it is, but connection with something larger than ourselves, something meaningful will keep despair at bay and even allow us to do more than just survive. It will give our lives quality.

And now back to you, dear reader, and we hope and trust that you have found your unique way of survival, the meaning larger than yourself which allows you to find the quality we all deserve, our unique quality. And if we could be of help in this quest by what we wrote, well then of course you just added to ours and we thank you!



Esther



STORY OF THE MANIAC

"Justice, what is you doing?" asked Peace. I finally have it this time! "Have what?" asked Peace. I finally have the perfect killing method... "Say what? You said this when you changed the stoning to rope, not to mention that chair thing you came up with." Oh all those worked just fine until people started yelling cruel and unusual punishment. "Justice, where do you come up with these crazy ideas?" asked Peace. Simple, they come from within! Chuckled Justice. Get it? Within. Injustice! Justice shared another laugh with itself. "So what is this one?" Peace asked. This will be my favorite because I'm using gas and then some can choose my lethal injection method still also. I'm on a roll Peace, I tell you once the people understand that justice is nothing without Injustice and vice versa, who's gone stop us? Justice gave another chuckle.

"Miss Liberty I need to talk to you again about Justice." What is it Peace? It's always something with Justice! "Justice is violating your fourteenth amendment again by restraining the life and privileges of our people Miss Liberty. Even more so Justice is violating the eighth amendment as well." Tell Justice to come into my office immediately, Peace! "Justice," Peace yelled, "Justice, Miss Liberty wants you in her office!" Peace, have you snitched on me again? Justice asked. What happened to no Peace no Justice? Justice asked Peace, approaching the office of Liberty. "Justice you are killing innocent people which has nothing to do with me," Peace answered calmly. Once they are charged and convicted of a crime they are no longer innocent, Justice spat back at Peace with rage!

"Watch your tone in my house, Justice, because what you are doing is breaking your own law, killing yourself," Miss Liberty stepped in. What do you mean by that miss Liberty? Justice asked. "You and your lower courts charge and convict my citizens capitally saying it's wrong, yet you walk around here all day practicing on how to commit the same offense! Shame on you Justice," Miss Liberty yelled at Justice! But, but, but, Miss Liberty, we can do that because we have power, Justice said, carefully choosing the words that came out. "Justice, that's not power, that's the mind of a maniac. America was built on white supremacy! Have you forgotten how many Blacks and Latinos were killed just to establish that? Have you forgotten they always find themselves back on top? Justice, have you forgotten they know how to read our language now?" Miss Liberty spat back at Justice.

Bowing the crown of justice, Justice asked humbly, What should I do Miss Liberty? Looking Justice in the eye, Miss Liberty simply stated: "Freedom from arbitrary undue external restraint, esp. by a government. 2. A right, privilege, or immunity enjoyed by prescription or by grant; the absence of a legal duty imposed on a person."

Justice, you must understand its not just us anymore, the people know our language now, they can read and they know now that Justice and Injustice come from the same body of government. Murder by the government will never be justified, look at all your attempts, and yet it still comes back wrong!  
STOP IT NOW IN THE NAME OF LIBERTY!

BLACK MAN IN WHITE FACE

Someone who solicits an insurrection or someone who master-minds a crime against another is the same thing right? I know people who have been convicted of capital crimes for less than a mere conversation about nothing. AmeriKKKa's injustice system was built to protect white power - not interrupt it.

I've spent the last few weeks reflecting back on the attack and takeover of the U.S. capitol and one clarion lesson stands out to me the most - The thing we call the justice system (including FBI, CIA, DOJ, Capitol Police, and the local police department) was not built to interrupt white power, white privilege, white property, or even white violence - it was built to protect all of those things! When this nation needed the justice system to prevent, stop, or even intervene in the capitol attack, that justice system showed its true red, white, and blue - it wasn't built to stop white people from doing whatever white people want to do - but let a black man or woman spit on the ground - they'll be crucified in the name of the same justice system! Disgusting!

N.O.

TOO MUCH THINKING

What happens when you sit in a cell 24/7, 365 and you're left to your own devices?

The answer is resentment. Negative thoughts come to me. You think about the ones you wronged and the ones that wronged you. You think about the cards you were dealt in life and the bad memories of the past. You had dreams and ambitions for life; especially as a kid. But then you hit the age that ambition and dreaming go down the toilet. Society has preconceived notions of the Blackman and what we're supposed to be in their eyes. And when you don't have anybody to guide you through the White World we live in, then you get stuck in the rabbit hole. And now you're setback in your thinking and ideology of life and what to expect out of it. You think the world owes you. You think the world turned its back on you. You think, "Why me?" But you don't know any better because you didn't have the same opportunities as the next person, or the right guidance through this already planned out ideology of the White World we live in.

But now you're older and a whole lot wiser than you were as a child. You view the White World differently. You find your place and your hustle and you craft and mold it and perfect it. Only you can do that! And you use it against the White World, and you realize how much easier life is, and how you finally fit in this White World, and you win at all costs. Turn resentment into reward and salvation, because when you think too much you tend to overthink and you miss the big picture.

Justin White

P - 21

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### Deeper Than Knowing

Rainbows and blue skies,  
sin exists and everyone dies.  
We are not One.  
Illusions and lies!

Smoke and mirrors.  
Concepts and ideas given names  
cannot touch us, nor us them.  
Know the truth!

Eternal life is not gained  
or obtained; it is realized.  
Miracles are ordinary.  
Mysteries revealed and explained.

Ah! Understanding,  
deeper than knowing.  
Knowledge of truth  
is bliss!

Nicholas Smith





# A Christian Perspective

Produced By  
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty



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Greetings Friends and Family,

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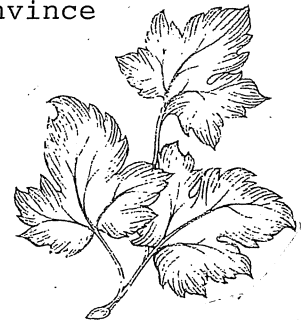
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\*\*\*\*\*

Welcome to 2021. I'm just going to jump right in and start with this quote. "I'm not going anywhere until the miracle has been delivered." These words were spoken by Pastor Wiley, spiritual advisor to Willie Smith, on the night of his scheduled execution. Willie shared this with us the next Sunday in church, so obviously that miracle was delivered. And the living testimony that our brother brought back to us from the "death cell" was so powerful that I just have to share some of it with you.

Some of y'all may know that Willie was put on single walk once they set him an execution date. That means that when we would go out on the yard, we walked by Willie in the single walk cages. Willie told us about one brother who would ask him as he walked by whether Willie's chin was up or down. As you can imagine some days his chin would be down, but that simple question was enough to shake him out of his funk and remind him to keep his chin up. Because as God's word says in Jeremiah 1:19 "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you" Says the Lord, "to deliver you."

Willie reminded us that God's word is solid, and that when man tries to contradict that, believe God's report. And that Satan has no power except what we attribute, or he wouldn't be walking to and fro looking for those he can divide. The devil was in the garden watching and listening to details to use to convince us that God isn't real.

(continued...)



We have to remember that as long as we walk according to the flesh, we will always hunger for more, never satisfied with what we have, nothing will ever feel like enough. But when we learn to walk in the Spirit, one cup will sustain us. We will hunger no more.

Willie also urged us to "Go first" because people are watching and need to see us stepping out in faith. To show our faith in our actions, because that will stick with those who see it. He used the example of Peter climbing out of the boat and walking on water (Matt 14:29) to encourage us to be bold. Go first.

Willie said he didn't want anyone to have to face what it's like to go around the corner, it's that bad, but he said that the strength and comfort to get through it was in us. The scribes and scriptures we sent him lifted him up through that whole process. He used the term "blown away," and I can attest to being blown away by my brothers reaching out to me through troubled times over the years.

There was so much more spiritual "meat" to digest from Willie, both that morning, and since. His faith through that ordeal will always be an example and inspiration for me. Faith and prayer work together. Thank you, from Willie, myself, and all of us on life row, for your prayers during this ordeal, and I encourage you to continue to keep him in your prayers. He has a powerful testimony that is a threat to Satan, but God's grace and glory can overcome any attack on His sons.

As I write this, I pray in Jesus name that those of you reading it will know the peace that God can give you. And those in need of healing will receive it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Be Blessed,  
Yours in Christ,

Bart Johnson  
Vice-Chairman, PHADP



#### A TESTIMONY

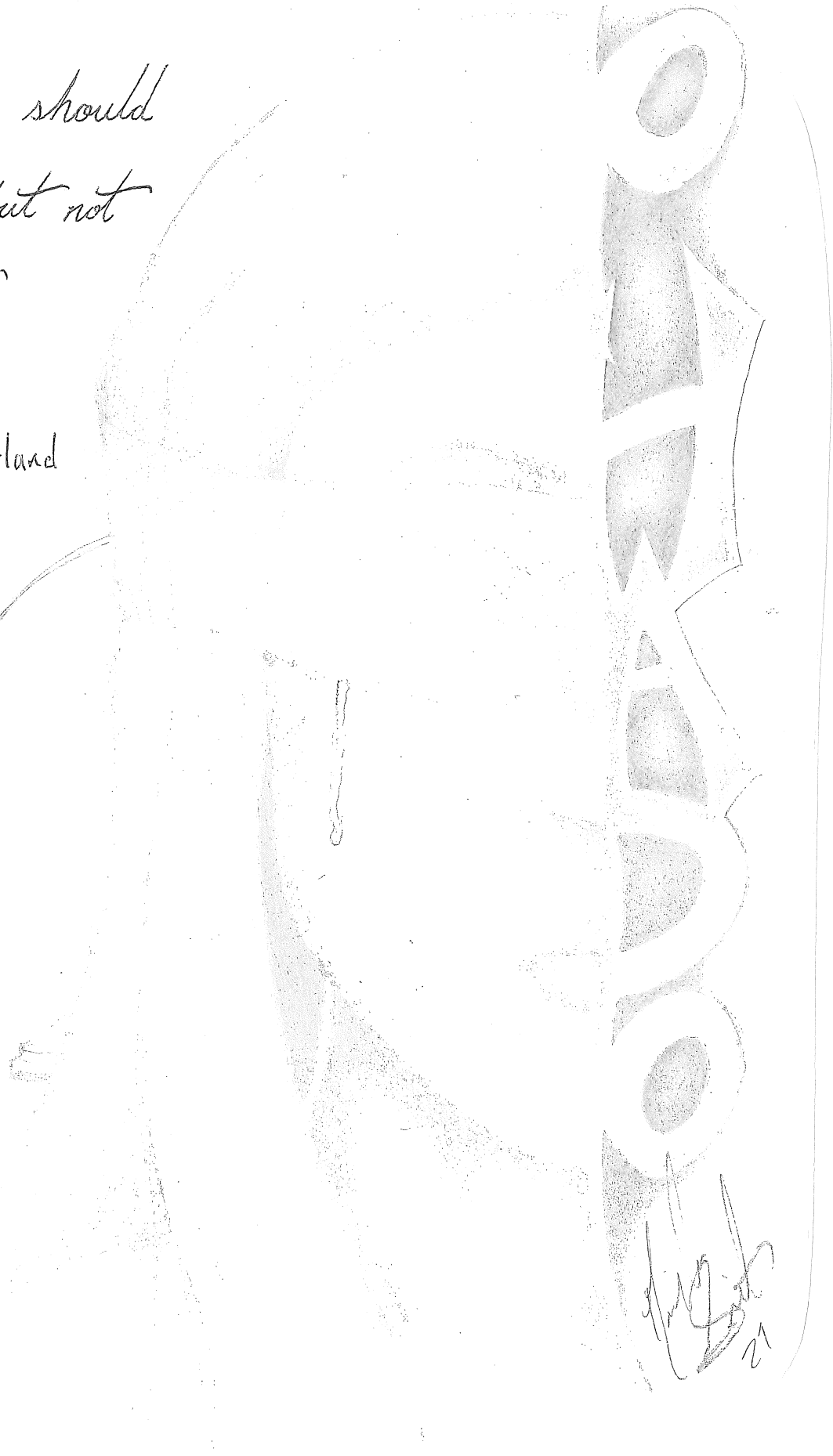
The past couple of years I've been having recurring dreams about being back home with my family. But 3 or 4 days ago, while I was taking a nap during the day, I had another one. But at the end of the dream I saw Jesus standing in front of me. I recognized the back of His head and His shoulder. As soon as I recognized Him, I woke up. And the Lord spoke to me and said. "Son, I am standing between you and your enemies." Psalm 91!!

If this isn't the Spirit of Comfort, I don't know what is. I was filled with peace about all things, and still am.

David Lee Roberts  
Z - 560 / H - 6

"Justice should  
be blind, but not  
heartless."

# Merrick Garland



*[Handwritten signature]*  
12

## WHO ARE WE?

Who are we? That is a question that has been asked for generations. People have always had a problem with their identity. Even in biblical times, men went on spiritual journeys to find out who is a man, and what is a man's purpose on earth. Even when a man figures out his purpose, there's always a small amount of doubt that lingers in the back of the mind. So will we ever figure out who we are?

There's a saying that we are the product of our environment. Which means that if you came from a bad environment, you will be a bad person. So many people associate their behavior with how they were raised. That saying has some truth to it, but a partial truth is a lie. So people who have gotten in trouble have used this as an excuse for their mistakes. When we allow our environment to be a factor in the decisions we make, then we become a product of our environment. Which only proves the fact that we don't know who we are.

When a lot of us were sentenced to death, we took on a different identity, we have an opportunity to become an inmate, a prisoner, or a convict. Now we become a product of the prison system, which in most cases the prison experience doesn't turn out positive. The aspect of how you see yourself in light of the prison system becomes a reality in the lifestyle of most of the people doing time. The term institutionalized becomes evident in the actions of the people first in the mindset of the people, "as man thinketh so is he." So what we think we are, that's who we become. I became a part of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty, I became Project Hope, and Project Hope became me, so that's who I am.

A person cannot figure out who they are apart from God. If Christ is me and I am Christ, that's who I am. No matter what chaos of the environment I grew up in, I'm able to rise above it and become the man that God intended me to be. God never intended me to be incarcerated, His plan from the beginning was for me to be free. Along the journey I have traveled and decisions I made growing up caused me to get off the path that God had laid out for me. The man I was destined to become. The freedoms and liberties I have now started with my decision not to accept the facts of my crimes. The truth is this, whom the Son sets free is free indeed, so that's who I am!

Jeffery Lee  
Sec/Treasurer, PHADP  
G1-A1



## SHOUTS OF GRACE GRACE FOR IT

Thank you Father God, for this opportunity in a new year of "2021" to be able to write the families of PHADP, the supporters, and readers of this newsletter.

Presently, I'm meditating on the grace of God, what it is, and what it's not. The Spirit of Grace has been referred to as unmerited favor, undeserved blessing, and a free gift. This grace from God does not give us a license to practice sin, but it gives us (as believers in Christ) the power not to practice sin.

I notice from Zechariah 12:10 that when the Spirit of Grace is poured out wherever God wants it to, it causes us to see our Savior, the one who died for us all.

God's grace is received by faith, and it's to be used for good works; God's grace is sufficient in whatever situation we may find ourselves in.

God's grace causes us to turn away from sins; God's grace causes us to die to ourself-ishness/flesh; God's grace causes us to pick up our cross (calling) daily; God's grace causes us to follow Jesus and do His will for our lives.

Now that's something to shout about huh? If there was ever a time we need grace, now is that time. Well let me stop for now, but not my prayers for you all.

May the Spirit of Grace continue to rest, abide, and surround you all during this pandemic. I ask this is the mighty name of Jesus of Nazareth. Amen.

With much love and appreciation  
Earl J. McGahee  
Z - 466 / H - 18



## MISHPOCHAH

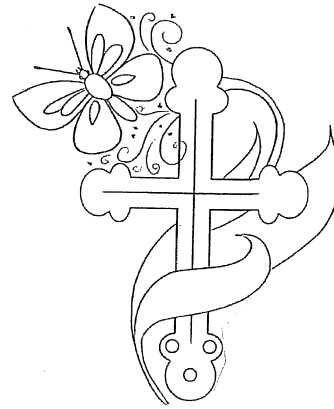
In the Hebrew language there is a word for family, and the word is michpochah. This word also means tribe or gathering of the church. I see with this word that Father God is reminding us that we are one family. One tribe, one church, but in the world, we do not act like it. We have race division, we have division in our blood families, we have division in the church, and finally, we have division in the government. Right now, Father God is saying no more division, but bring back unity in everything. We at PHADP stand together as a family. We fight together in this fight to stop this death penalty. We are many writers, but we have one voice and that is unity. I am asking all of our supporters be an active part of our mishpochah and join us in our fight to take down the Goliath that is the unjust death penalty.

An angel in the shadows

UNWORTHY

In faith I walk,  
In belief I stand,  
I am no more than  
an unworthy man  
I call on my Lord,  
I praise His name,  
He holds my soul,  
He eases my pain,  
I am worn in body,  
In mind, in soul,  
This broken world  
Has taken its toll  
Please call me Lord  
To your side, your  
Light, I'm ready  
Lord to hand over  
this fight.  
I walk in faith,  
That the day will  
soon come,  
That you call home  
This unworthy son  
All Praise

Booman  
Z - 598 / H - 2



Who Are We?

A Christian perspective,  
is a man's perspective: a singular view.  
A universal, historical (past)  
prophetic (future) perspective is God's.

To view ALL in whole,  
from before the beginning,  
even after the end,  
from ALL angles is God's view.

One became and is becoming ALL,  
to experience every point of view,  
thru ALL.  
And ALL is One. This is TRUTH!

You see reflections of self,  
thinking it separate, due to appearances.  
Not knowing, ALL is you and from you.  
You know not who you are.

Close your eyes.  
Be still. Be quiet.  
See yourself, not the body.  
Who are you? Who am I? Who are we?  
Nicholas Smith

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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. Donations may also be made on line by going to our website and clicking on "donate" on the right hand top corner of the front page.**

