

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

# On Wings of Hope

Project Hope



Volume 23 Issue IV

Oct. - Dec. 2019



## A GENTLE CHRISTMAS

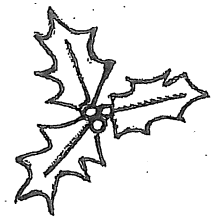
Yes, a gentle Christmas is what I wish you and the world. Why gentle I hear you asking and why not merry which is after all the customary wish? Bear with me for a moment while I explain how I understand gentleness and then you will realize that it does not exclude merry. Gentleness does not mean weak, actually true gentleness is the very opposite and denotes strength. It takes strength and gentleness to hear the other, to not constantly blow one's own horn, to stop being angry and self righteous and to go where the other is.

When one listens or reads the news and visits social media outlets one encounters few incidents of gentleness and very few go where the other is. Instead we moan and groan that things have never been worse and my question is how do we know that? Some who have actually lived through a war might question that statement but the much bigger question is what are we achieving with all of this very ungentle, destructive and self righteous behavior?

And yes, even Christmas gets caught up in our deficient in gentleness behavior. We complain about the commercialization of Christmas, that it starts earlier and earlier and that Christmas carols go on and on. Really? Are you a victim who cannot control your shopping behavior and might there not be quite a few of us for whom Christmas carols bring back fond memories? Yes, I know that you feel that this is the fashionable response and flows from the endless critical attitude and horror stories fed to us on a daily basis which we choose to ingest.

If it appears that I am getting away from the message of Christmas here is a quote from the Christmas story: "on earth peace, good will toward men" which includes of course women as well as children. We all know the story from the First World War when on Christmas Eve 1915 there was a cease fire and both sides joined in singing Silent Night Holy Night. "In the week leading up to the 25th, French, German, and British soldiers crossed trenches to exchange seasonal greetings and talk. In some areas, men from both sides ventured into no man's land on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to mingle and exchange food and souvenirs. There were joint burial ceremonies and prisoner swaps, while several meetings ended in carol-singing." (Wikipedia) That took the strength of true gentleness. And so I wish you a gentle Christmas and hope that it can start early and extend well into the New Year! We need it now more than ever! Please let us give true gentleness a chance! And yes, do have a merry Christmas!

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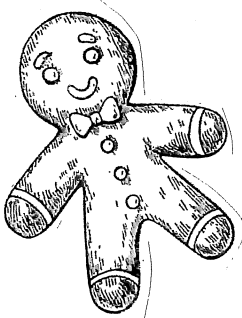
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**THIS NEWSLETTER WAS WRITTEN, TYPED AND FORMATTED ON DEATH ROW AT HOLMAN PRISON**



Joy and Blessings

With the holiday season approaching, it again becomes the time of giving thanks, and good will to all. So, in keeping with the spirit I would like to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, and a very Merry Christmas. May your holiday season be filled with family, friends, and blessing after blessing.

Also, as the holiday season approaches so to does a new year, as with all of that we know comes reflection. Reflection on what we have or have not accomplished this year, and what we will have to give thanks for as we sit around the big table covered with food. Reflection of what we want and need under the pretty tree, and of the goals we set last New Year's Eve. After all of the reflection we will determine if there has been made any progress in our lives, and the world around us. I would have to say that there has been. Slow as it may be, there has been steady change in people's mindset about the death penalty. More and more people are opening their eyes to see the injustice associated with the death penalty and that it is no more than an antiquated form of revenge rooted in racism and social discrimination.

With organizations like Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty out there taking a stand and helping expose the many shortcomings of the death penalty, Professor Katie Owens-Murphy making efforts to reach the youth, journalist Lauren Gill writing very informative news articles, our Executive Director Esther Brown working tirelessly to help make sure our organization remains relevant in the abolition movement, progress is being made and we are thankful. Our fight goes on, and we are thankful. Our list of friends and allies continues to grow, and we are thankful. When the time comes to set up the pretty tree, with all the beautiful lights, we will be wishing for more ground gained in this fight to abolish the death penalty, and going into the new year, we will set the goal of gaining that ground, and we will be thankful!

Everyone please have a safe, happy, and blessed holiday season. Take care of yourselves and each other.

Happy Holidays  
Anthony Boyd  
Chairman, PHADP



Alabama News

Fourth Quarter 2019

\* Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy's exhibit entitled "Ghosts Over the Boiler: Voices From Alabama's Death Row" (named for one of Darrell Grayson's poems) was launched September 20 at the Collier Library on the UNA campus, along with a virtual tour available online. Advisory Board member Gary Drinkard, who was a member of our Board while on death row at Holman, was a part of this successful event. We can't express how grateful we are for the dedication to make this project a success. The exhibit is currently on display at the Florence-Lauderdale public library, and has been part of a lecture for no less than five classes at UNA.

\* Our Executive Director Esther Brown attended the Freedom Fund Banquet of the Barbour County branch of the NAACP on Sept. 27 where she received the 2019 Membership Service Award. She was honored, and of course took the opportunity to share our purpose, as well as remember our founder Jesse Morrison. Congratulations Esther!

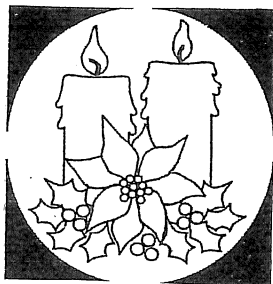
\* In October, ADOC finally made public the lethal injection protocol as part of a lawsuit filed by several in the media. While some information was not included, and other information was redacted, we are encouraged by this shift to more transparency, and we hope that it carries over to any new nitrogen hypoxia protocol the state may create.

\* Congratulations to Dr. Chris Brown, son of former PHADP Board member Gary Brown, who was executed in 2003, for being a part of the "Cast No Stones" conference in Columbus, OH. The event was convened by Journey of Hope, and Dr. Brown spoke along with Sr. Helen Prejean, Shane Claiborne, Rev. Sharon Risher, and Bill Pelke.

\* Our Executive Director Esther Brown was invited to speak about the death penalty at the Kiwanis Club of Valley, Alabama. We appreciate the opportunity to be the other voice, and are grateful to the local library for facilitating the event.

\* On Sept. 12, Executive Director Esther Brown, in her role as Chair of the Alabama State NAACP Death Penalty Moratorium Committee, participated in an hourlong meeting with NAACP leadership and Gov. Kay Ivey. We hope that this encounter, though brief, will prove to be fruitful.

Five  
Justice  
People



### GRATITUDE

Bro. Jimmy asked a group of us today, "When was the last time you saw God?" I won't tell you what each of our answers were, but I will tell you that every answer was shaped by our perceptions. Both how we each individually perceive God in our lives and how we perceived the question. We didn't have a lot of time to discuss the matter fully, but one conclusion that was clear was that God is always working, moving in our lives, whether we choose to see it or not is completely up to us.

None of us knew that at that moment officers were passing out bags of goodies from a ministry called "Christmas Behind Bars." Nor can we know all the things that God is continually doing to sustain us, and bless us throughout our days.

I think most people can understand the shift towards giving thanks that often comes at this time of year. We reflect on all the things that have happened throughout the year, and the people in our lives that bring light to even the darkest of times.

With each of these quarterly newsletters, I am blessed with the task of reflecting on the past few months activities, and to express some of the gratitude that we have for those who support our organization. Of course, there is never enough room to fit everything in, just as there is no way that I could fit every ministry or individual who pours into my life personally. That's why it's so important to express gratitude as often as you receive. And to pour into others as much as you can, because God's work doesn't stop when it gets to you.

Just as we acknowledge that the push for death penalty abolition is a marathon and not a sprint, so is life. My hope for all of you is a holiday season filled with peace, joy, and many blessings Merry Christmas, and a prosperous New Year!

Bart Johnson  
Vice-Chairman, PHADP







THE EXPECTATION OF THE SEASON

We find ourselves at the close of another year. This year have went by at an accelerated pace. The highs and the lows of the year is a gauge to our expectancy of the season. We as a group and a family here on Liferow experienced some loss at the beginning of the year. Yet we have stayed focused and went forward to accomplish some goals that we sat for ourselves at the beginning of the year. This time of the year is generally set aside for family and friends. Why wait until the end of the year to show love to our family and friends?

This time of year can be stressful and depressive. The financial strain put on families this time of the year is often a burden. I remember growing up in a household that made due with what we had. We as a family would all gather at our grandparents' home, every family would bring a different meal. It was all put together and would turn into a huge family meal. Those days are long and gone, the grandparents isn't here anymore. Everyone have decided to forego the family thing to do their own thing. I, myself, blame the advancement of technology for tearing down of the family structure. The family dinner is now shared over a computer screen, this is the new normal.

The reason for the season is and should always be the celebration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ though we're not sure of the exact day or month of Jesus's birth. I've never seen a present for Jesus. Now you don't even hear Merry Christmas anymore, mostly all you hear is happy holidays. We go out of our way not to offend anyone so we have taken the Christ out of Christmas. Jesus is truly the reason for the season, but over time He has been excluded all together. The reason we don't see presents for Jesus at Christmas is because we have no expectancy of Christ being at Christmas.

Our expectation of how our season will be needs to be determined before the season arrive. We can choose to not allow our situation and circumstances to dull our expectancy of the season. We can enjoy family and friends throughout the year and not just at the end of the year. Christ needs to be celebrated each and every day, not just on Sundays and Christmas. I feel once we invite Christ back into the season, the families will be restored the sense of love and joy will come back. My expectation for the season comes from memories of the times from the past of how things was. As long as we remember how things was, we will enjoy how things is, and look forward for things to get better, so expect the season to be glorious! Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!



Jeffery Lee  
Sec/Treasurer, PHADP



Season's Greetings! To all the families and individuals that support PHADP, may the blessings of the Lord be upon you all.

I would like to dedicate my article in this fall season to those traveling to be with their loved ones. Especially to all the great grandmothers, grandmothers, mothers, aunties, sisters, and nieces. O' yea the wives naturally smile!

Who each year experience stress in the process of getting all the family together and preparing great meals for thanksgiving and Christmas. Thank you all (smile)!

Here is a remedy that you might consider this year (1) not to be anxious for nothing (2) In everything, pray with thanksgiving, and (3) Let your requests be made known to God the Father who created us all.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your heart and mind. Amen.

I have found out that there are some great benefits to talking with the God of all creation by faith through prayer. It helps us discern between busyness and fruitfulness, protect us from discouragement, prevents distractions, gives us energy, sharpens our discernment, eliminates fretting, produces confidence, invites God into our activity, produces peacefulness, and lastly, eliminates worry and anxiety.

I heard it once said, that thankful people never go through life expecting a bed of roses, never let bitterness rule their lives, never surround themselves with ungrateful and negative people, never compare themselves to others, never let current circumstances dictate their future, never see negative in any situation, and thankful people never worry or complain, but whatever they do in word or deed, they do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Happy Holidays!!

With much love and appreciation for you all!

Earl J. McGahee  
Z-466 H-18



MAY YOU ALL

A New Year approaches, another year ends. And we want to say thanks to our virtual friends. So with that in mind at this time of year. We send you this wish with some holiday cheer. May your problems be viewed as the smallest of things. May you have all the love and laughter a happy heart brings. May you all prosper, not only in wealth, but in love. May you have peace and someone to hug. May you set aside all of your guilt and your fears. May all of your aches (ouch) and your pains disappear. May your dreams be fulfilled. May you spend just a little more time with "good friends." May your whole life be viewed through a rose-colored lens. Because, as a wise man said, we are all worth more than the worst thing we have done. And in 2020 may you watch with excitement the things life imposes with expectation. And may you take time for you, take time to smell the roses. One thing is for certain, nothing will just happen. And a dream is something you wake up from, we are in charge of this life, and the life we create. So here's to a New Year, Peace, Love, And Joy. Have a Merry Christmas and eat plenty of red velvet for me. I like sweet potato pie, not pumpkin, just a hintt ;)

Be Merry and Full  
Truly,  
Anthony Tyson



A Christmas Hope

Tis the season when a lot of people celebrate the birth of Christ. I'm amazed at how so many of these same people allocate this time of year to be especially caring, sharing and mindful of the needs of others. Tis also the season when peace on Earth becomes a common theme. It's a good thing as well as a bad thing. It's a bad thing because the other times of the year are spent missing out on the opportunities that are given daily to work towards peace by others.

There's no doubt in my mind that supporters of capital punishment pray for peace on Earth around this time of year. I don't doubt it because, for the most part, they are bible thumpers. So, in their minds, it's probably an abomination not to do so. Plus, it's the only time of year when someone is not executed, at least in the State of Alabama. Perhaps there's hope for a common peace?? At least it's a start, and I'll take it.

It is my hope and prayer that we will achieve peace on Earth. Let us all put in the works and continue to set the example for others. After all, faith without works is dead.

Season's Greetings!  
OMAR D.

GOD BLESS THE GENERATIONS

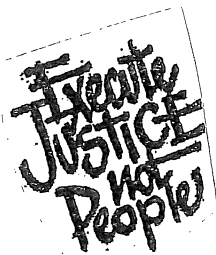
Often, when I think about my situation, I think back to my senior year in high school. For our year book, we were asked to submit a quote that would accompany our senior picture. With where I was in that moment of my life, I chose a quote from the rap group Public Enemy: "It takes a Nation of millions to hold us back." At that time I don't think I had a full understanding of those words. I also feel that anyone on the outside that reads that quote from my year book would be surprised at my current situation.

Now, when I look at the changes that have been made in this country, I attribute it to my generation, a generation of change. History shows the evidence of change from generation to generation. It was my generation that elected the Nation's first African American President. It is my generation that has changed views towards racial divides. We are the generation of thinkers and decision makers. We prepare the next generation to be handed the baton. As our new views and opinions get into position, the ways of the old fade away.

When dealing with the justice system, our High Court wishes to title it "The evolving standards of decency." I often wonder if I will be alive to see the end of the death penalty. The future seems promising, and I pray that God allows it. I received a letter from a friend that teaches social justice class through her parish. She told me that her class was asked the question, What is unjust? To my amazement and her's a fourth grader answered, "The death penalty." It touched my heart and was a revelation of that promising future! God bless the generation that will continue to change the world we live in.

Now, when I think back to my situation, I realize that my quoting Public Enemy 19 years ago was not by chance. God has blessed my generation, and though I am here on death row, I continue to do my part for my generation and the generation to come. Trusting in God and helping to change views on social issues, I am still in the race, we all are! God's favor is over us, and with God we cannot fail. Proudly I say, "It takes a Nation of millions to hold us back."

Still in the race,  
Nicholas Acklin  
Z-648 N-7



Christmas

Christmas approaches, so many friends and families will be uniting or reuniting. So much love and joy, so many gifts will be shared. Everyone will be Christians during this time of year and it doesn't matter if the birth of Jesus is recognized or not. So, to all the friends and families of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty, I pray that your Christmas is a very joyful and loving one....

My Christmas is celebrated with joy because I know that despite all that you all or I may be dealing with, we all get a break during this time. And I know that you all are truly living life, by loving, being loved, giving and receiving. I have peace knowing that during this season America as a whole works toward the common goal of all that this season asks of us... America is truly one Nation under God...

Now, I will most likely get up, cut on the radio to listen to some Christmas songs. My favorite is, "Let it Snow" by Boyz to Men. I'll stare out the window up into the sky full of hope and know that somehow, some way, all my family and friends can feel my warm embrace of Good Morning and Merry Christmas. And before turning away, I gather all of my strength and send forth a burst of love, then I drift off into my thoughts which is where I spend my Christmas!! (smile)

May you all's every day after Christmas be as it was on and during Christmas..

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a what?? You finish it!! (smile)

Thoughtfully & Respectfully,  
Tony Barksdale



UNTITLED

As this year comes to a close I'd like to give thanks to God for another blessed year. For the progress that Project Hope has made through the help of our supporters.

I'd like to thank God for the progress made by me in my growth and development. I thank God for His unchanging hand being on me and for the manifestation of this new trial and exoneration.

I pray that God's Mercy and Grace be on all throughout this season.

My prayers are with the family of those who lost loved ones, especially the hurting families of Baby Cupcakes, Baby Taylor, and the family of the child that was lost in South Carolina.

Randy Lewis  
Information Director, PHADP

When I started to write this article, I had another topic in mind. However, it seems that I can't write it, not now anyway. Instead, I'm going to write what I'm feeling now.

The holidays are upon us. Most of you will be spending time with family and friends. Some of you will take time to help some here feel loved and blessed. Honestly, I've never been into the holidays, for reasons I'd rather not get into. Lately, that has changed some. I've been thinking how nice it would be to enjoy the holidays for what they actually stand for. With Thanksgiving just a few days away, I've sat down and thought what do I have to be thankful for. Being on death row, one could say nothing. We don't get big turkeys and hams or even grandma's famous banana pudding or red velvet cake. But there is plenty everyone here has to be thankful for. I know it varies from person to person.

I personally am thankful for still being alive and having the opportunity to write this article for the newsletter. My hope in writing this is to give thanks to our board members who gather all the information needed to keep Project Hope alive, and the ones who make sure the newsletter is ready. Also, to give thanks to all our free world supporters.

I am also thankful for being able to write this because maybe my words will help someone. I know how hard things have become. A lot of our families and friends are under a lot of stress to make ends meet. Now that the holidays are here, that stress will be worse. I ask you to take time and look at everything you do have and not what you would like to have and be thankful. Remember, what you do have, the next person may not have. Something small you overlook every day, may be something big someone else wishes for.

I want to end this by wishing everyone a blessed and happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you for your support.

DRO



*We appreciate everyone who has supported us over the years, and as time passes our mailing list needs to be updated. If we haven't heard from you in a while, and you still want to receive a paper copy of our newsletter, please let us know. You can simply mail this notice back to us in the envelope included with this newsletter.*

**Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty  
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Dear Readers,

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to geet you this Holiday Season. I hope that when this newsletter reaches you it finds you and your familes in the best care possible.

I speak for all of us here on death row, when I say that we're thankful for you taking the time out of your day to read our newsletter.

I would like to wish all of you a safe and blessed Holiday.

Yours truly

Toforest O. Johnson

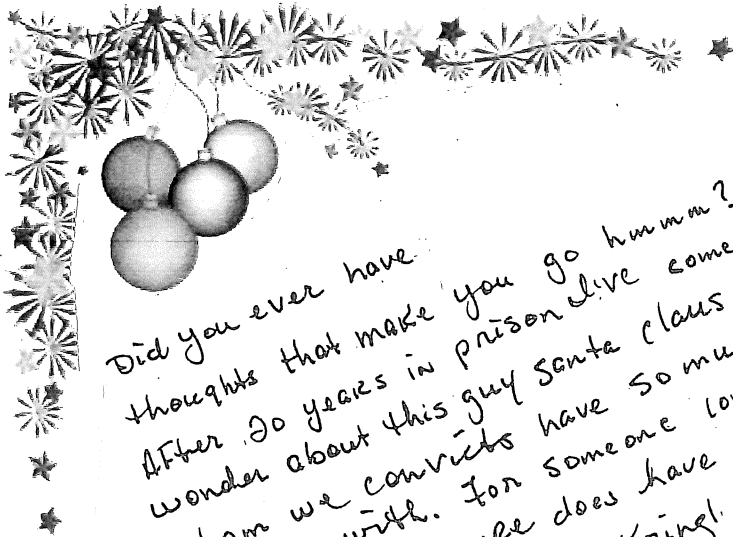


*The only  
real cranberry  
sauce comes in a  
can & don't get me  
started on egg nog  
-Bast*



To inspire my people--  
Little frets and worries  
rob us of our peace of mind  
So the more we rush,  
the more we get behind  
Now stop fretting and speak on nothing  
Until U surrender what upsets U  
Calm your heart and fret not  
**BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING!**  
In Due Time!  
--N.O.--

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



I remember sitting on a log  
one Christmas Day, waiting  
for Santa to come my way  
and that's all I have to say...  
-Larry D.

Did you ever have  
thoughts that make you go hummm?  
After 30 years in prison I've come to  
wonder about this guy Santa Claus, with  
whom we convicts have so much in  
common with. For someone loved in  
the world he sure does have a lot of aliases:  
Kris Kringle, Father Christmas,  
and St. Nick. He's gotta be a  
super hero or an arch-criminal or  
you know there's no extradition from the  
month pole. OK, so they got me,  
I'm institutionalized. G. BEAT



To all the little boys and girls, be  
thankful for the toys you get,  
and to all the parents, don't get  
caught putting the toys under the  
tree.  
Mall  
Noble



NOT EVERY  
GIFT COMES  
WRAPPED IN PAPER  
BOWS. THE MOST  
PRECIOUS ARE LOVE, HUGS,  
& HEART FELT HOPE.

what exactly is Figgis Pudding??  
and do we really want it right now?  
Jeff P. Rides

May your hearts be merry during this joyful season  
For our hearts are the center of every aspect of being human;  
our reason, emotions, and will.  
The heart directs our affection, shapes our decision making  
and determines our ultimate allegiances.  
Where your treasure are, there your heart will be also  
Much love, peace & joy!  
Paul F. McDaniel Z-466  
Waitful thru the night in a joyful  
way, waiting for the gifts, love and hugs  
to come from family and friends far away  
Sharing the joy that bring family and  
friends together, loving the moment like  
a Christmas present.  
Jeremy Davis Jr





It was the night before Xmas  
 all thru the halls of Holman  
 Not a creature was stirring, Not  
 even a mouse... wait a minute, this  
 Holman, there were plenty of mice  
 running around here... HELP!!  
 Please... NO serious Help!!

Clocking In

In the clutch of time,  
 looking for a crutch from time,  
 to help me walk this path,  
 which is being eaten by lines,  
 cracks and potholes,  
 and mouths full of sewage grime.  
 Lusting,  
 having problems trusting,  
 both God and man,  
 double-dutching the line,  
 seeing a part of me,  
 I can't define.  
 Time,  
 the one thing we can't erase,  
 but if that miracle ever comes,  
 while I run this endless race  
 I'll remind myself,  
 you're the brother of a fearless champion,  
 now slow down the pace,  
 so other's can catch up,  
 and together embrace,  
 the fullness of God's grace,  
 through time I push on...

Blood is thicker  
 than water, but  
 Family is subjective...  
 LOVE those that love you,  
 and HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Blessings  
 to All...

Omen

What do you call a snowman with a six  
 pack an abdominal snowman  
 What kind of music do elves listen to?  
 "wrap" music

So I Looked  
 and behold,  
 a pale horse  
 And the name  
 of him who  
 sat on it  
 Death, and  
 Hades followed  
 with him.



Project Hope



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NOT PEOPLE!**

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Seasons  
Greetings

