

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

# *On Wings of Hope*



Project Hope



Volume 24 Issue 4

Oct. - Dec. 2020

***Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People***

## THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTMAS

What a year this has been for challenges! Challenges that will not end with 2020! We have all experienced and are experiencing them right now wherever Christmas finds us. We are tired of all of these challenges and now you present Christmas as a challenge?

Please forgive me that I do but not all challenges are created equal. There are some we can meet and some that overwhelm us. So please let me introduce Christmas as one that no matter our situation we can welcome and meet.

Christmas for us in the northern hemisphere comes at the darkest time of the year but nevertheless it brings light. Isn't that perhaps a wonderful symbol for all of us who find ourselves in darkness? A message of hope? And that is its challenge! What will we do to seek, find and share the light of Christmas?

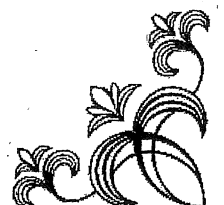
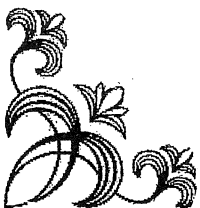
Let us start with the first Christmas! Where did it take place? A stable because there was no room at the inn! Here is our first clue! Who do we know for whom there is no room at the inn, in society or in our hearts? There could be many different reasons why we have no room in our hearts for this individual but we know who he/she is no matter where Christmas finds us whether on the Row or on the street!

And now for the next step! Will we be the shepherds or the kings bearing gift? You know best and bear in mind that there is no greater and more valuable gift one can give than the gift of self, one's presence and willingness to listen. To be there!

As I am sure you know, challenges met have their reward and I promise you that you will receive yours. You will receive what you gave. Light will shine into your darkness knowing that you received the gift of being allowed to make a difference and from that will flow hope!

I wish you the peace, joy, love and hope that is 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.

**NATIONAL OFFICE:**  
P.O. Box 1362, Lanett, AL 36863  
Email: [beesther@earthlink.net](mailto:beesther@earthlink.net)  
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

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

Seasons Greetings,

Wishing all of our family, friends, and allies a very happy and blessed holiday season. We are all going through some very trying times, but it's holidays like these that help to remind us all of what's truly important, and how resilient we are as family units, and as people. Instead of focusing on the negatives, we focus on the positives, as well as our strengths over our weaknesses. We welcome on board as our new legal research assistant Hannah Swenson, and we commend the Alabama Democratic Party for working tirelessly to get Amendment 4 on the ballot, and getting it passed, which will remove racist language from Alabama's Constitution. Positives! In this holiday issue, you'll find a contribution from long-time friend and supporter Dale Wisely, with an article from the Catholic view concerning the death penalty. As we always like to encourage our friends, family, and allies to contribute, this is another positive! So, as we're all enjoying the good food and holiday atmosphere, may our spirits be rejuvenated and our resolve reinforced. There is still work to be done, and we will continue to overcome. It's just who we are, and what we do!  
Please continue to be the other voice, be blessed, and have a very happy and special holiday season.

In Solidarity,

Anthony Boyd  
Chairman, PHADP



God's Love & Desire

Season's Greetings! and Happy Holidays! to the families, supporters, and readers of the PHADP newsletter.

The months of November and December hold special memories for me. I'm reminded of the most important decision that I would ever make, which happened on November 24, 1987, of asking for God's forgiveness and surrendering my spirit, soul, and body to the will of God the Father of Love.

And December 25th, a day that has been set aside to acknowledge God's love gift and desire that he has given to humanity.

I was reminiscing about how I was told back then by some professionals here, as well as convicts alike, that nobody can really live for God in prison, especially on Death Row.

I'm so thankful that I didn't believe those words that they told me back then, but listened to that still small voice in me to continue looking to Jesus, the anointed one of God, who is the originator and perfecter of my faith for all eternity.

Trusting in the Lord God with all my heart and not leaning on my own understanding of life. In all my ways, with every new day, to acknowledge Him and He would make straight my path.

Lord God, when your love and desire spilled over into creation you thought of me. I am from Your Spirit of love and for Your Spirit of love.

Let my heart O'God always recognize and cherish your goodness in all things, may all my praise be directed to you, teach me reverence for every person and all things, strengthen me in Your service, may nothing ever distract me from Your love and desire.

Neither health nor sickness, wealth nor poverty, honor nor dishonor, long life nor short life, may I never seek nor choose to be other than what you intended me to be.

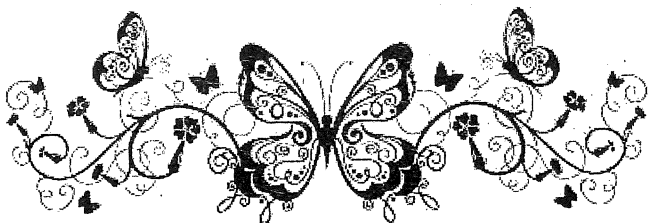
God's deepest desire is that we let Him love us, and freely love Him in return, once we receive this revelation that we are loved with no strings attached, then it's our turn to look around us and reach out to our families, communities, and world with this same love and desire of God.

In closing, as we come to the end of this year and the beginning of a new year of 2021, my prayers are that each one of you would continue to be kept safe and protected from COVID-19 in Jesus of Nazareth's mighty name, Amen.

With much love and appreciation for you all!

Earl J. McGahee

Z-466 / H-18



Where are the  
last days  
we've heard talk  
seen signs  
raised hopes  
felt decline  
but we hold on  
for every moment here  
and the ones that are gone

Alabama News

Fourth Quarter 2020

\* Arthur Giles passed away September 30, 2020 after a years-long battle with cancer. Art, as his friends called him, was a former PHADP member, a long time friend, and his life was proof that no matter the surroundings, it is possible to live a worthwhile, meaningful, and grateful life. We are grateful for the care he received during his illness, including 24 hour loving care from 2 fellow inmates, made possible by the administration. We are including a remembrance honoring Art from Judy Collins in this edition.

\* We take great pride in announcing that our late Chairman Darrell Grayson's poem "Ghosts Over the Boiler" is being published in the journal POETRY. Not only is POETRY the oldest monthly poetry magazine in North America, founded in 1912, but over the years it has been responsible for the discovery or publication of English language poets whose names read like a who's who in poetry. We are so proud and grateful while at the same time mourning the loss of a dear friend and an innocent man. R.I.P. Darrell!

\* U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama granted habeas corpus relief to William Marshall, overturning his death sentence, due to ineffective representation during the sentencing phase of his trial.

\* U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit has overturned the death sentence imposed on Matthew Reeves, granting him a new penalty phase due to ineffective representation.

\* Executive Director Esther Brown, in her position of Death Penalty Moratorium Chair for the Alabama Chapter of the NAACP presented her report to the Quarterly meeting via zoom. We are grateful for all she does to coordinate with this, and many other organizations in and out of Alabama.

\* U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away in September, her death will be felt by all who believe in justice, especially by those of us who fight for the abolition of the death penalty.

\* Our former Student Representative, Hannah Swenson, who is now a law student at Gonzaga University has volunteered her services as a legal research assistant to the Board. We were pleased to accept her offer and have not forgotten all she accomplished as our Student Rep. Welcome on board, Hannah!

\* Journey of Hope founder Bill Pelke passed away in Nov. He was a tireless advocate for abolition and we will never forget the Alabama Journey of Hope in 2012, it was a great experience for many in this state! Many thanks, and R.I.P. Bill Pelke

Dear Board!

Some but probably not all of you know me! I certainly recognize most of your names from the Wings of Hope newsletter articles you've been writing for a long time.

I have followed Project Hope since I was in middle school (many years ago as I am in my 30s now!) when Esther (my amazing grandmother!) tirelessly began her work with Project Hope. Your unique organization has been largely motivation to me with exploring human rights advocacy in my career and now getting focused on criminal justice reform as I work my way through law school. You are inspiring!

Thank you for letting me join you in working on research. I am very excited to learn more about your work looking at why the Alabama has the only state constitution without the Equal Protection Guarantee. I currently have access to a very comprehensive set of legal research databases that hopefully will be of use. I am happy to do that research for you or on other topics that come up for Project Hope. Please let me know how you would like me to get started! Even some basic questions or topics you'd like for me to dive in with might be a good start and we will see what we find.

Peace,  
Hannah



Project Hope

Not murders, not discrimination, not injustice so the struggle becomes as a suitcase not a brick upon our shoulders and our connections with others.

Project Hope

Believing the struggle remains, but with more hands and more knowledge we become united, we become brothers and sisters expressing our truths from different voices and thoughts we've become alive human beings to our readers

Project Hope

A selected society stamped us with a label of death row but with continued work and fight and prayers, we break chains. break free of the suck-holes and failures.

Project Hope

Every page turned we carry the torch of not executing but implementing justice. Establishing votes to affect a better society a better people in better position so we pave a path together, wide enough for us all to walk shoulder to shoulder with freedom fighters visions in mind, making old dreams our new reality

Project Hope

Raheem

Dear Future by Kanye West

Dear Future,  
I still believe in you  
We still believe in you  
Even in our darkest moments,  
We believe.  
We believe in a world at peace.  
We believe in our people.  
We believe in our families.  
We will see families anchoring on faith.  
Our future holds a better America.  
In our future, we will H.E.A.L.  
Hold Everyone Accountable to Love  
Our future will provide expecting families with a safe  
and secure plan that values every stage of life.  
Our future will provide a justice system that treats  
everyone equally regardless of their socioeconomic status.  
Our future will provide an education system that promotes  
freedom and visionary thinking.  
Our happy, healthy future looks like the new Garden of Eden  
with children running and the elderly beaming with joy on how  
beautiful our world has become.  
Our future has homes for everyone.  
Our future has love.  
Our future is free from debt, shame, guilt, worry, stress,  
war, greed, hate, misuse of power, prejudices, manipulation,  
and discrimination.  
Jesus loves everyone.  
When I close my eyes, I see God providing us with a bright  
future. I feel like a kid the night before Christmas when I  
think about our future.  
Dear future,  
I still believe in you.  
I know the world is going to get better, but you need us  
as a people to heal. You need us to hold everyone accountable  
to love.  
God is love.  
Let's lead with love. Our future is waiting on us.

**Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty  
P.O. Box 1362 Lanett, AL, 36863**

[beesther@earthlink.net](mailto:beesther@earthlink.net) • [www.phadp.org](http://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 on line by going to our website and clicking on "donate" on the right hand top corner of the front page.***



Adaptability

I know what you're thinking, this is the Christmas Edition of On Wings of Hope, why is Bart writing about adaptability? Why isn't he reminiscing about happier times and finding peace and joy and gratitude? Well, he is. He is doing lots of that, looking back, seeing so much life, looking around, seeing the current slice of life being enjoyed, looking ahead to the good times we're going to have. But he couldn't do that if he wasn't able to adapt.

This year, we've faced and adapted to some new, big, unexpected, difficult stuff. And there's still some year left. And we will continue to adapt.

Not holding onto the old ways or walking down old paths, but finding better ways and blazing new trails.

Most of our readers understand from their own experiences or connections with ours what it's like to not have control over things that you think you should have control over. No matter what life throws at you, it won't take your ability to adapt.

People are resilient, we can overcome so much (I know this because of how rarely I see a person curled up in a ball sobbing because life isn't fair) We can adapt to survive anything and if we go that extra step and continue to adapt, we can thrive, to live so vigorously and in such a way that the find joy, peace, and yes, even gratitude in each and every day.

So whatever you're facing, whether it's during the holidays or in the new year, remember that nobody can take your ability to adapt away from you. To change and shape yourself and your situation to better suit you.

Adapting got us through 2020, and it's gonna get us through 2021 too.

Bart Johnson  
Vice-Chairman, PHADP  
Z-778 / F-18



Introduce Ur'self

Lightskin Afrikan sitting within the confines of the government system kidnapped by state officials arrested handcuffed without being found guilty

Introduce Ur'self

Bias beliefs separate me and denies my equality free and within this fence I'm in a lost-society we need to have a high % to abolish this fallen axe or premeditated murder with each day weeks months and year or we'll become nonexistent

Introduce Ur'self

Stop looking away as lives fade who will police these seats that make laws... Agendas move people because of gifts and power here in Alabama

So you matter we matter so society must microscope vision this lifestyle to catch this curve of conservative American justice

Introduce Ur'self

Raheem.



Mr. Jeffrey J. Davis  
Kris Jenner

Happy Holidays from Dr. Roman



Jesse Phillips Hello!

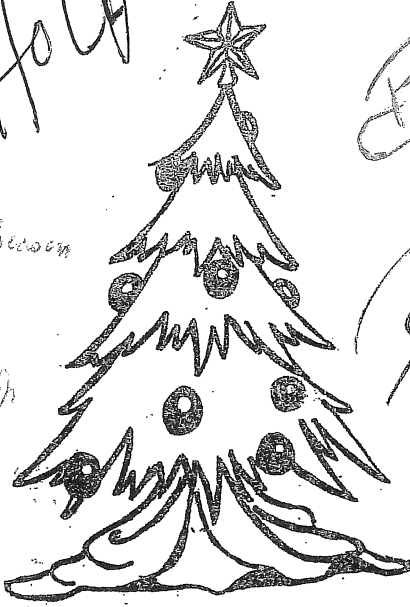
HAPPY  
Holidays

Earl McGahree

Boah!  
Hombug...  
Shill

Have a safe  
and bless  
Holiday Season

Jummy  
Davis



Randy  
Levo

Esther

May you find magic  
this Holiday Season!

Bart

HAPPY  
NEW  
Year

Love To  
All



When life  
gives you lemons  
Guess what... you're  
Alive, and you have some lemons!

Blessings  
Love joy  
Strength

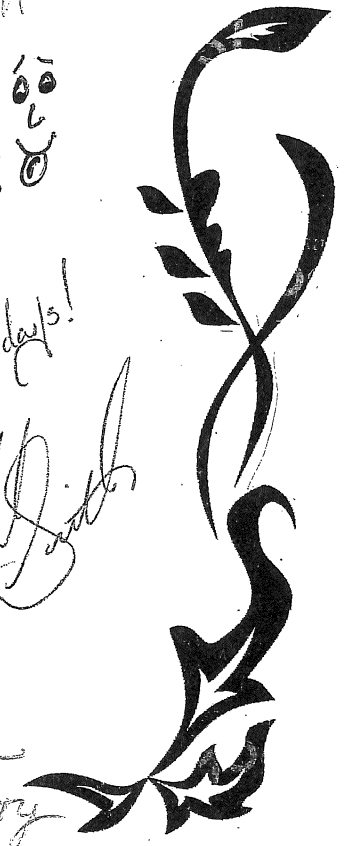
Together  
ness

MAY THE SPIRIT  
of the holidays carry  
into the New Year

Let's  
enjoy all days  
as they are  
Holidays!

Happy Holidays!

Shill





Arthur Lee Giles

**"How can I be anything but thankful" for your post about my dear friend Arthur Lee Giles. "How can I be anything but thankful" for my long friendship with him! That quote is an often repeated phrase I heard and will continue to hear from Art. His life certainly was not without difficulties, but those words define his generous spirit; may they serve as a call to all of us.**

**Your co-founder Jesse Morrison's call, "Be the Other Voice" also actually defined Jesse's role in becoming the most significant voice, thus mentor in the life of Art who, many years later writes of himself in a sermon, "in 1978 I were 18 years old and I committed a terrible crime against humanity, and in 1979 I were sent to death row. At that time, I was as ignorant and stupid as one could be and upon my arrival, two cells up from the cell I were put in was a guy by the name of Jesse Morrison, who were the first person to truly befriend me! I ask, please hold my friend and brother in heart, in thought as I go forth here."**

**Going forth Art describes a January 1981 night of anguish, "feeling totally afraid, lost, and despair like I never felt in my life before" followed by a powerful, prayer-full conversion experience after which he cites "Trading My Sorrows, trading my shame, I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord' 2 Cor 4:8-9. . .Not to mention 'The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death!' Ps. 102:19-20."**

**In his sermon entitled "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" Art also writes of other friends, like the Pearsons whom he first got to know as pen friends, who "has been surrogate parents to me for 38 years and I am proud to call them my dad and mom." He writes of an attorney and paralegal, "long proven and two dear friends" along with others.**

**Before concluding, he returns to Jesse who was transferred to Donaldson Prison as Art had earlier been: "in early 1997 Jesse asked me to help him start a P.H.A.D.P. group there and we did with me as co-group leader and just before he got off of death row later that year, he asked me would I take over the group. In spite of being afraid of such a leader role, but due to me feeling that I owed my brother so much I had no choice but to say yes! Because he were the first person our heavenly Father placed in my life here on the row. Who not only emphasized the important of education to me but also took on the role of big brother and mentor to me inspiring me to be the best person that our heavenly Father always wanted me to become, , , , I will always pay special homage to my late brother, Jesse Morison.**

**"I shared these blessed people with you because I truly believe our heavenly Father placed them in my life at a specific needed time and special purpose as well. Because a big part of each one of my blessed earthly friend here is a part of me and the person that I am today. I express as Plautus once said; "Nothing but heaven itself is better than a friend who is truly a friend!" and each one here has my endless thanks."**

**I add my thanks to my dear friend, Art Giles, to Esther Brown and you the board of PHADP and the two men about two cells from Art's (Roderick Byrd and Westley Harris) who lovingly cared for him as his illness progressed, also to the administration and health care professionals. We all are so much more than the worst thing we've ever done! May we like Art ever grow into being the best person we can be, loving, forgiving, "executing justice, not people. Judy Collins**

My First Christmas

'Twas the day before Christmas, and all around the house everything was stirring including the mice. A young mother of two was expecting her third child, a baby boy she hoped, and as the hours passed, she had an idea that the baby would be born on Christmas day. Christmas came and the presents were given, yet the baby wasn't born. Then, around 2 o'clock pm, the young mother went into labor. The first contractions were so intense that surely the baby boy would be the last present of the day. So the young mother walked about 40 yards to her mother-in-law's house to let her know she was in labor. Her husband wasn't home at the time because he was at work. So her mother-in-law called her good friend who was a midwife, in those days most babies were delivered by midwives.

When the midwife arrived at the house around 6:30 pm, the mother had dilated a few centimeters and she just knew the baby would be making his entrance shortly. As the minutes turned into hours, the baby still wasn't born. So the midwife put water on the stove to boil so she could make her a pot of coffee. The two children were playing with their toys, which consisted of a Raggedy Ann doll and a Tonka truck. As the young mother awaits her new baby, her husband still hasn't arrived home yet because when he got off work at 8 o'clock, he decided to go to a Christmas party. So it's 11 o'clock and the labor pains and contractions start to increase, so surely the baby was going to make it in time for Christmas. Yet the midwife told her to just relax, she still wasn't ready to deliver, so she just continued to drink her coffee and sew a quilt that she had brought with her to finish.

Now it's early on the morning of December 26th and the young mother is experiencing more intense contractions. Now it was time to begin pushing, and as she began pushing, the baby boy made his debut into the world. He was 9 pounds 10 ounces, a very big baby with a beautiful big head of hair. My mom said I looked like I was a couple months old when I was born. She named me after my great grandfather. So my first Christmas was fighting to be born into this world, and once I was here, little did I know, the fight continues to stay in this world. So this Christmas season, don't ever take for granted a humbled beginning, enjoy your life and family to the utmost of your existence, because faith and family are big reasons for the season.

May you have a Merry Christmas and a blessed 2021!!!!

Jeffery Lee  
Sec/Treasurer  
G - 1 / Z - 674



**The Catholic Church and the Death Penalty: A Long Journey to Mercy**

By Dr. Dale Wisely

For most of the history of the Catholic Church, capital punishment was considered acceptable. It is easy to find centuries of writings of Catholic authorities defending the death penalty. In 1566, The Council of Trent referred to the death penalty as "lawful slaying," and asserted that civil authorities have the power over life and death of its citizens.

We begin to see substantial, if slow, change only in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Theologians and Catholic officials began to debate the morality of the death penalty. Beginning with Pope John Paul II in the mid-1990s, we begin to see writings that clearly express a teaching that the death penalty should only be used in the rarest of circumstances.

The teaching of Church began to evolve into this idea, which we can illustrate with an analogy. Most of us accept that sometimes it is necessary for a police sniper to take the life of a gunman who appears to be about to shoot a hostage. In such cases, it is reasonable to conclude that there is no other way to protect innocent lives. This principle was applied to the death penalty. In principle, the death penalty may be justified, Church authority reasoned, in cases in which there are no alternative means of protecting people from a violent aggressor.

Until 2018, the Catholic Church maintained this official position--allowing for this single exception--even while strongly advocating against the modern practice of the death penalty. Even before 2018, the Church was increasingly arguing that cases based on the "defense of the innocent" were, as Pope John Paul II wrote, "very rare if not practically non-existent."



**Execute  
Justice  
Not  
People**

In 2011 John Paul II's successor, Pope Benedict, on at least two formal occasions, called for the abolition of the death penalty. He took no official action to address the exception described above.

Pope Francis, the current Pope, began speaking and writing about the death penalty in a way that would suggest that he did not recognize ANY circumstances under which execution is morally correct. Pope Francis recognized that, in modern times, there are other means to protect potential victims from convicted and incarcerated murderers.

The Catholic Church publishes an official catechism, an encyclopedic book which includes the official teaching of the Church on matters of faith and morals. In a revision of the Catechism published in 2018, the Church proclaimed its total opposition to capital punishment, and now allows for no exceptions. Quoting from the Catechism:

"Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

"Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide."

In 2020, in a document entitled "Fratelli tutti" ("All brothers") Pope Francis declared the application of the death penalty as "inadmissible" and said, "there can be no stepping back from this position." He called for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty.

"The firm rejection of the death penalty," he wrote, "shows to what extent it is possible to recognize the inalienable dignity of every human being and to accept that he or she has a place in this universe."

-----  
Dale Wisely, Ph.D., is a long-time opponent of the death penalty and a long-time supporter of Project Hope. He is retired from the practice of clinical psychology and served twelve years as a public-school district director. He lives in Birmingham where he is now Director of Family Life at Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Hoover, AL.



#### A Brighter Tomorrow

So, Trump is on his way out of the White House, the holidays and new year is on the way in, and yet it appears as though COVID is here to stay. Many people are having trouble adapting to these new realities, lost loved ones, postponed court dates, etc. But, it's in the midst of our darkest days that humanity shines the brightest.

I've seen inmates caring for inmates on their death beds, blessing each other with gifts and acts of kindness that might have been undeserved. These are convicted killers?! No. These are people, just like you and me, that realize there's more to life than self, and it's so clearly visible in people's selfless acts.

As so many of us have lost loved ones during these troubled and dark times, my heart goes out to all. Rest in peace to those we've been forced to move forward without, and know that we'll never forget you all. For those of us that have survived: take courage and be strong because a new and beautiful world is right on the horizon.

Happy Holidays,  
Nicholas Smith

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

P.O. Box 1362 Lanett, AL 36863

Tel: (334) 499-0003

[beesther@earthlink.net](mailto:beesther@earthlink.net)

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### My People

The universe has an essence that is familiar to my people's soul. It feels like home or a part of us. Was the Goddess still thinking about the universe she created/designed when she started creating my people.

When I look at the universe, I see my people and in us I see the universe. The night sky with all its beautiful stars, so like my people's eyes. The universe has colors so bright they are colorless, colors so dark they devour all light, so like the skin tones of my people.

Your mind can't comprehend the smallness that holds the vastness, nor can your ears bear to hear the roaring silence of thundering quiet, that is the universe. So like the soul and spirit of my people that will never be crushed.

At times the universe is violent, selfish, wasteful, organized and disorganized, as well as beautiful. So like my sometimes self-defeating people. The Goddess may have put a minute part of the universe's essence in my people because it is also a part of her. Because she knew that we would need that knowledge because of my people's hubris. After all, we are only human.

Jessie M.D.Y. Phillips  
Inspired by Langston Hughes' "My People"

