

# On Wings of Hope

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Project Hope



## YOUR CHRISTMAS INVITATION

How long is it since you last received a personal invitation? A little while I hear you answer and that could be because you are incarcerated or for some of us out here because of Covid 19 or simply because we are old and are too tired to participate much in life.

Whatever the reason is really of no consequence because this is an invitation that we must accept because of its uniqueness. No one else can accept it for us. Yes, I know it sounds like a bit of a contradiction to term it unique and at the same time assert that it is issued to all. But that is how it is because we each do receive our own very personal invitation.

Fortunately while we figure out how we might accept and respond to our Christmas invitation there are some fundamental guidelines to help us. We will find those when we look at the message of Christmas itself and judge our response accordingly.

Let us begin with “peace on earth, good will to man” which is a great place to start by which to judge our response. The possibilities appear endless whether it is healing rifts or refusing to engage in divisive arguments in our very divided nation. I know you will know best how to respond. And then there is “and there was no room at the inn”? Here is the opportunity to reach out to the other, the different one, the excluded one. Yes, that one, the outsider! And moving right along with ways to accept the invitation what do you think was the message of having the simple shepherds visit the manger before the 3 Kings or Wise Men? Nothing against the powerful or the wise but I for one am glad they didn’t arrive first!

Am I forgetting joy? Definitely not because joy will be automatic when you accept your invitation! There will be big joys and small joys and both are important.

And finally, and I like to leave the best for last, the overarching message of Christmas is love which will guide you and me as we accept our special Christmas invitation.

And so I wish you the PEACE, JOY and LOVE that is Christmas,

Esther





Happy Holidays To Everyone

I hope everyone's having a wonderful and blessed holiday season, and may New Year bring with it progression and not regression, more acceptance and inclusiveness, instead of more hatred and division. As we go into the holiday season it's with heavy heart because we will be without our friend and brother Willie Smith Jr.; who the State of Alabama seemlessly and callously murdered on October 21, 2021. We were saddened and horrified by the federal courts total decision to disregard Mr. Smith's intellectual disabilities. Now, the State of Alabama has set its designs on murdering another intellectually disable friend and brother, Mr. Matthew Reeves on January 27, 2022. The United States Of America..... Arguably the greatest country in the world... Land of the Free, where there is equality and justice for all... Hold Up, wait a minute... Unless of course you are black, your bank account is in the red and your I.Q. level is (well) below average, and then there's no freedom, no equality and definitely no justice for all.

As we move into the holiday season - kitchens will go into overdrive, shopping sprees will push credit limits to the brink of their breaking point, good cheer will start to spring forth as it does every year around this time, and family - well, they will be family. While all of the hustle and bustle is taking place in your lives, we ask that you please keep Matthew Reeves, his family and his attorneys in your thoughts and prayers.

Anyone that has read any of my articles or my editorials, know that I can go off on a tangent at any second and without a moments notice (smile), but Hey it's the season for giving and I have decided to give you all a break... This Time.. (LOL)

My gift to all of you this holiday season, no thank you needed. Everyone have a blessed, memorable and safe holiday season. Know that we have made great strides in our fight to end the death penalty, but the fight goes on. 2022 will bring with it more positive change, but change requires work and therefore. We all know what we have to do... Work for the changes we want and need. When people sincerly share the same goal that goal is made more obtainable when those people work together. There are millions and millions of people against the death penalty all around this country and the world, but we are all fighting in our very own little corner of this spinning ball we are on. Dr. King marched on Washington with millions, change came! The million man and million woman marches speak for themselves and Change Came! The Rock the vote

**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](http://www.phadp.org).  
Email group:brandon@phadp.org  
also on Face Book:  
Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty in Alabama

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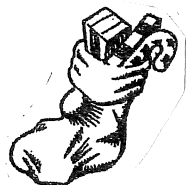
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**THIS NEWSLETTER WAS WRITTEN, TYPED AND FORMATTED ON DEATH ROW AT HOLMAN PRISON**



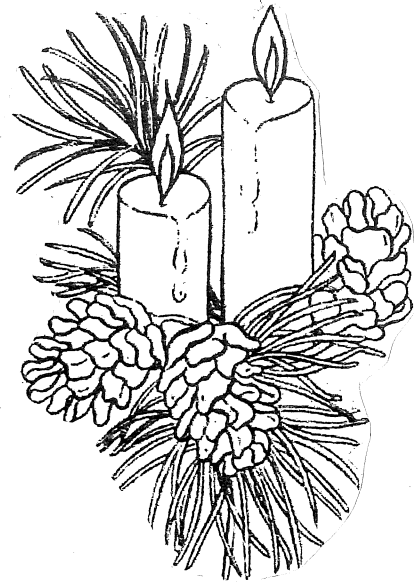
campaign was unleashed and Change Came! The Black Lives Matter movement was launched and Change was started!!  
Get the picture yet?!

Happy Holidays,  
In Solidarity,  
Anthony Boyd -  
Chairman Of PHADP

- One Accord -

Life behind a door,  
what a bore.  
And talking about, what an eye-sore.  
Hymph!  
I can't even cry no more,  
while you try to find a way,  
to even the score.  
I am -  
focused on things,  
you try to ignore.  
My place isn't,  
bowed low lips brushing the floor.  
It's beside you, while on high,  
searching for new path's to explore.  
THat'll lift up humanity,  
at its very core.  
Common Decency,  
Isn't a common house chore.  
Stop pretending to snore,  
and just for a second, Imagine,  
your life behind a door.  
To find common grounds,  
on what?  
This world needs now,  
No, not just opinions, everyone wants  
to shoot.  
So who's going to rebound,  
the lights aren't so bright there.  
Who's going to be down,  
Change what needs to be changed.  
To bring about change,  
Remember,  
Old trees drop the new seeds,  
Hmmm, How Strange!...

- Tony Barksdale  
Z611/M-5



Alabama News  
Fourth Quarter - 2021

\* Willie B. Smith was executed by the State of Alabama on Oct. 21, 2021. His light is sorely missed by those of us on the row, as well as by those whose lives he touched on the outside. The extent to which his execution was botched and may never be understood, as ADOC, citing COVID concerns, restricted media access to one witness. But it was noted that Willie jerked up from the gurney as the poison entered his veins. Willie sought to avoid this painful torture by opting for nitrogen hypoxia. Unfortunately, Willie was not offered this chance. In a statement, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor recognized "the fundamental inequity of the State's compressed timeline for notifying eligible inmates and haphazard approach to doing so", writing that "the way the ADOC has administered the Alabama Legislature's directive to allow those on death row to choose Nitrogen Hypoxia as their means of execution... was at odds with the gravity of that task and the humanity of those affected". "Once a State has determined that individuals on death row should have a choice as to how the State will execute them", she concluded, "It should ensure that a meaningful choice is provided".  
R.I.P. Willie, May you be remembered for who you became.

\* The State of Alabama has set a January 27, 2022 execution date for Matthew Reeves, follow developments in this case and find out what you can do on our Facebook page. We stand with our brother in faith that this will not happen.

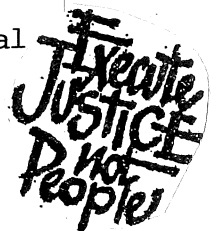
\* Our thanks are also extended to our representatives at Alabama ARISE meeting; Once again making Death Penalty Reform a priority issue. This is an important part of our roadmap to abolish the death penalty in Alabama one day.

\* There has been a change in how we receive our personal mail. We now receive a copy of the letter or card sent to us, so it is creating delays in our mail reaching us.

\* Executive Director Esther Brown, in her role as Death Penalty Moratorium Committee Chair submitted a quarterly report to the Alabama NAACP with up-to-date analysis of the current events regarding the death penalty. Thank you, Esther, for coordinating with the NAACP as well as many other individuals and organizations both in and out of state, notably, your interview/collaboration with New York Times journalist Don Berry. We are truly blessed to have Esther at the helm.

\* At the request of Advisory Board member Dr. Katie Owens - Murphy, we have submitted a piece to accompany the archive of PHADP's 30+ years of writings. While it was a look back at our past, it gave us an opportunity to envision a future we hope you all will join us to create, "One ~~W~~ithout The Death Penalty"

\* Doyle Hamm, whose controversial failed execution attempt drew national attention has unfortunately passed away due to complications with cancer. R.I.P. Doyle



Seasons Greetings and Salutations,

Here we are again, We find ourselves at a close of yet another year. With alot of things that have happened, that haven't ever happened before and probably won't ever happen again. Now that the hustle and bustle of the year is past us, we enter the season we normally set aside to spend with family, friends and loved ones. That was back in the days, now that we have endured a year and a half of the Covid-19 pandemic. What lessons has it taught us and what have we learned from it. One lesson that I have learned is the importance of family, we must cherish every moment that we have with one another. Especially now, because one day they're here and the next day you're gone.

Well my story goes back to a time that seems like decades ago. During a time that was normal to me where the foundation of family was much more structured, not like it is now.

It was the pre cellphone period, where families actually took the time to drive the three or four hours it took to meet up at Grandma and Granddads house. With every family bringing at least one dish that they prepared the night before. There was always that one Auntie that always tried to cook the Mac and Cheese and always added too much salt in it.

For the sake of peace, I will not mention Auntie ..... Name!

My family was a big family. We normally went down to my Grandparents house on my Dad's side of the family. My Grandparents had fourteen kids, a total of 7 boys and 7 girls. So I had alot of cousins.

My moms family mostly stayed in New York and they would fly in for the christmas every few years. Family back then was genuine, the love was shown and it was felt!

I remember one christmas - My Grandparents from New York flew in, they didn't stay at a hotel, but with us. Me and my brother had to give up our room so my grandma and aunties could sleep in our room.

We had to sleep on the hide away bed in the couch with my granddad Eddie, he was six feet five inches tall. So he took up alot of space and had to sleep next to him. He snored like a bear and he had some long toenails so those two nights were some long nights.

That year he brought us letterman jackets. A Miami Dolphin, New York Yankees and New York Giants jacket - so you know which one I chose. Thats why I'm a Yankees fan, he was one as well. It's those memories for me that made those times of the past special.

Those moments just don't happen anymore especially in the world we live in so if you have memories of times like those, hold on to them and cherish them because it will not be like that agian.

So enjoy the season and have a Merry Christmas!

Stay Safe

Jeffery Lee

Sec/Tresure

L-12



THE QUESTION BEHIND THE QUESTION

Children are wise and we should learn from them. They ask us questions and their response to our answers is: why! It is a shame that some of us outgrow that and are content with ready, superficial answers and even believe that it is a sign of intelligence to have a ready pat answer for life's more serious questions. One could say that it points to a refusal to grow up but that would be an insult to children who do ask and in the process often make us feel uncomfortable.

So allow me to make you feel uncomfortable with the questions behind the question of the death penalty and I promise to leave the answers up to you. We have the death penalty because we have crime, you say and I reply, why do we have crime? People are bad, you say, okay and I ask you, what makes people bad? Were they born bad? And now it gets to be a little tricky for you because you do not want to appear racist or snobbish. I take pity on you and prompt you a little by asking, why are people on death row usually indigent, 49% black and why are 80% there for the murder of a white person when more blacks are murdered than whites? Poverty you suggest, poor education and consequently no job opportunities, except perhaps McDonalds? Keep coming, I say. Drugs, yes, I say and I ask, would you want a court appointed, inexperienced and underpaid attorney to represent you if, God forbid, you were picked up by the police? No, you mumble, and I tell you I understand because I wouldn't want a divorce attorney either.

You feel relieved thinking that I am about to stop with those questions behind the question. Actually we have only just started because you still have not asked the questions behind poverty, racism, biased judges who override juries, denial of DNA testing or for that matter why we would execute the psychiatric, or people with intellectual disability. Makes you feel sick, doesn't it?

You see an out and ask, how about the other side, are there no questions behind the question there? So glad you asked because I have been asking myself a lot of questions why an Attorney General, for example, not only can't wait to resume executions but also feels it is his mission to denigrate those he will kill? Some answers come to mind and you be the judge! Even Attorney Generals have a history, so could it be his cultural background? What am I implying? By the tone of your voice we both know what I am saying but is there not more? Yes, there is. I would question anyone's self esteem who comes across as self righteous and holier than thou. You remember the Pharisees.

We have not had time to ask all the questions behind the death penalty and behind those who enforce it. But if this little exercise helped take you back to when you were a child and knew that there is always more than meets the eye and were not afraid to ask, then I am satisfied. Justice for all demands that we keep asking and asking and asking!



UNTITLED

One of my best Christmas memories I think was when I was an adult. I was a father of 6 children, I had a nice piece of change and I wanted to make Christmas special for each of my children. I bought each of them lots of toys and clothes. Me and my girlfriend had to wrap the gifts in secret places at secret times. The funny thing is, it seemed as if every time we got started, one of my children would come knocking on the door no matter where we thought we were hiding. Lol... They seemed to be trying to spy on us. Anyways, me and my girlfriend finally got the gifts wrapped and we placed them under the tree around 12 o'clock midnight, which was Christmas morning actually. We went to sleep and around 3 in the morning, I had awakened from my sleep to use the restroom and guess what? My 5 youngest children, who were 7,6,4,3, and 1 were all balled up in knots asleep with all the gifts. It was so funny. Around 4 am, I woke them up, along with my oldest son who was 16 at the time. Each of them opened their gifts and as I watched them I remembered my Christmases as a child and I was proud to be celebrating Christmas with my children as my parents did with me and my siblings. Later that day we had a big Christmas dinner for my family and my girlfriend's family. Everyone ate, had drinks, and played board games. It was very nice and to me it will be one memory I'll never forget.

Mario Woodward



## Greetings Friends And Family

Let me start off by thanking all of you who have supported us over the years. Whether it be financially, by your activism, or with prayers - we appreciate each and everyone of you! And we couldn't do any of what we do in here or out there, without so many good hearts doing it with us. To say we've had a tumultuous 2021 would be an understatement, seems like whoever designed this rollercoaster got paid by the ups and downs, but through it all our vision has remained clear and focused on our goals, not on the speed bumps or road blocks.

This is what you have to do when you earnestly desire to change your environment, not content with the status quo, and opposed to allowing whatever nonsense that surrounds you to shape you into something less than your potential dictates. We've been sharing this blessing (Numbers 6:24 - 26) with each other every night, and I think that I'll close by sharing it with you all.

May the Lord bless You and keep you.

May the Lord make His face Shine upon you.

And be gracious to you.

May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.

Yours Truly In Christ,  
Bart Johnson Vice Chairman  
PHADP



## CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Shhhhh...Heh, Heh, Heh, be verwy qwiet, I'm hunt'n wabbit.

When I think of my role as a younger me doing my part helping to provide for our holiday feast, this Bugs Bunny episode when Elmer Fudd is tracking Bugs Bunny comes to mind.

Setting up rabbit and quail snares or placing traps for the muskrats on the marsh. Providing meat for the table was something I seemed to have been born into, it came to me naturally. I was always out exploring as far back as I can remember. At some point a copy of a Boy Scouts survival manual came my way. It taught me a lot about trapping and fishing.

The holiday feast was always looked forward to because of its variety coupled with the excitement of Christmas day. But mostly when it was bitter cold with new snow on the ground I was always restless and eager to get out in the fields and woods to see the newest animal tracks in the fresh snow.

Christmas day dinner was by far the most spectacular, ham from a hog we had fattened the previous year, a turkey caught in a net fashioned from a discarded fishing net, rabbit and quail from ground snares, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, 3 bean salad, apple pie, apple cider, mussels, and oysters from Chesapeake Bay, razor clams and striped bass (rock fish) a centerpiece made up of various fruits and nuts, and some sort of drink concoction (non-alcoholic) which was made with cloves, cinnamon stick, and a pat of melted butter.

Then it would snow again while eating the Christmas feast, my thoughts of the fresh animal tracks to discover the next day.

Happy Holidays to all... Van



Memory Lane At Christmas

Seasons greeting to the families, supporters and readers of PHADP. My Prayers are that each one of you have been doing good in spite of the trials and temptations, that have come your way, May the Creator of us all give you grace and strength to carry on.

I was asked to write about my best or memorable Christmas.

Well right off the top of my head - I couldn't recall, until I called my sister and brother for some of theirs. My sister (Charimon) mentioned that when I was five and my brother three, our mother took us to town and had some pictures taken with a fat white bearded, jolly man in a red suit.

I asked sis, please send me a copy of that picture if it still exists, I could use a good laugh, smile! My brother (Clarence) reminded me, when I was twelve and he was ten, that momma had hidden our christmas presents in the loft, which were not to be opened before christmas eve.

Well one day while momma was at work, Clarence and I decided that we would not only find out where our presents were, but also unwrap each one to see what we were getting.

We found out that we didn't have the skills to rewrap the presents back the way momma had wrapped them. Needless to say, When momma found out what we had done. She was NOT Amused and we recieved a pretty good whipping that day! Neither of us really recieved the gift we really wanted, but we did recieve those gifts that was essential (nice leisure suits, clothes, shoes etc..) Naturally the traditional red or green knit stocking, with the fresh apple and orange, pepermint candy canes, mixed nuts and toy cap gun or water gun inside it.

The one Christmas that stands out to me is in 1969 or 1970. I recieved a Model 77 Winchester Wood-Stock BB Gun. My brother and I were in grandmomma's backyard shooting at birds, bottles and cardboard targets that we drew with a bulls eye on it. Clarence was holding the cardboard in front of his chest and not to the side of him. Yes! I did (smile) I fired about three or four BB's in the bulls eye while he was holding it in front of his chest.

In both of our defense, we really didn't think that those little BB's would penetrate that cardboard, because it looked pretty thick (smile)!

Evidently not thuck enough. Clarence was fine, he only suffered a little sting and a imprint on his chest of a BB.

As I'm looking back fifty five years ago, I must confess that we had some amazing christmas'. My best christmas was when we were living with our grand-mother and some of my Uncles & Aunties would come to visit at christmas time. This would be a time to see and play with some of my cousins that I hadn't seen in a while. Grandmomma's house would be filled with adult conversations, loud noises of kids, laughter, love and the aroma of good food cooking...

In closing, I'm thankful and humble for these memories. I pray as we come to the end of "2021" and preparing for "2022" - May Gods presence, power, patient and promise continue rest, abide and surround you all.

Merry Christmas and have a blessed New Year!

With Much Love & Appreciation,  
Earl J. McGahee  
Z466/L-24





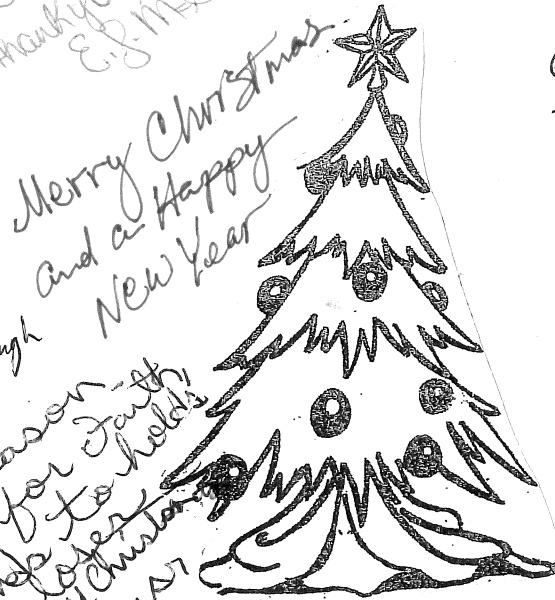
Happy Holidays & Happy <sup>NEW</sup> Year  
Darryl Turner

Gifts of the Season  
is just another way of  
expressing love & appreciation  
I would like to appreciate Jesus

Jesus come for you & me  
For those who sin, those who suffer  
For those who suffer because of sin  
For those who sin to alleviate suffering  
Jesus thank you for your mercy on us All!

Christmas is everyday  
for me and mine so have  
fun on your one day.  
Dorothy Holms

The most valuable gift  
comes from within...  
tricky to wrap though



Merry Christmas  
and a Happy  
New Year

Holiday Joy  
and Happiness  
Merry Christmas  
and Happy New Year!  
Marybeth  
William

This is the season -  
to be thankful for faith,  
family, and friends to hold  
blowholes when clothes  
get too tight.  
Merry Christmas  
Jeffery A.

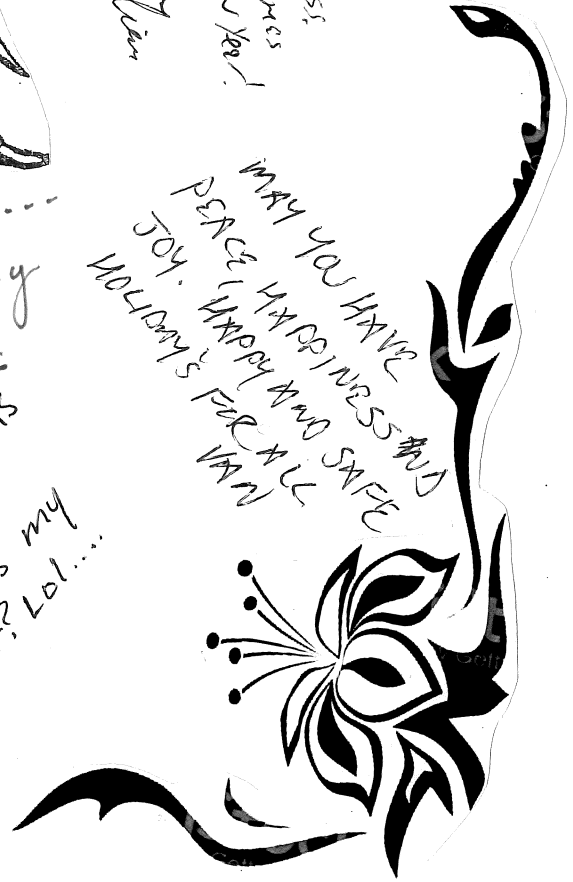
Be Blessed.....  
with love, peace, joy  
and solidarity

JINGLE BELLS,  
BATMAN SMELLS,  
ROBIN LAID AN  
EGG.... OR  
WHATEVA THEY  
BE SINGING!



Ho-Ho-Ho  
MERRY CHRISTMAS  
Ho-Ho-Ho  
So where's my  
Gifts at? Lol....

MAY YOU HAVE  
PEACE, HAPPINESS AND  
JOY. HAPPY AND SAFE  
HOLIDAYS FOR ALL  
WV



Miracles

Miracles do not happen without the work in practice. Practice meets and is hard work toward goals enhanced. Expressions of joy when it happens but also well prepared mind explodes, endorphines released, all repaired. Even though it's only temporary. Even for a thought to marry, visions that show it's truth. Only alone in a two person booth, Life practiced in small particles - only to become this life's miracles. Is it expected or just wanted? The need so daunted. The pleasure release from the work - The delivery easy from the stark. No child, just results. Rain drop insults.. Those deflected by life's umbrella, Peace within protects from any fella. A force of nature comes through different variables. Fighting, winning - That's The Miracle...

M. Williams



My First Christmas

Night before Christmas everyone gathered at my Grandmothers house. Aunties, Uncles, Mother, Cousins, etc... It was all nice and warm, food cooking on the stove, kids running around playing. My Uncle Donnie would say, "Alright y'all it's time to get to bed, Santa is on his way... If he catches you up He's not going to leave you any gifts". We would race to our rooms for bed time. Christmas morning my Grandmother would wake us up and gather us around the christmas tree to issue us out our gifts to open. My Granddad would be making coffee for him and granny. We would play til day break so we could go outside and play. We would be outside playing with each other and the kids in the neighborhood til the street lights came on.. Those were good times. And the memories serve me well..

Randy The Great  
Lewis 2741/L-56



A NEW BEGINNING

My walk into the purpose and relationship with God came with a weaning experience. In 1 Samuel 1:22, Hannah had to wean Samuel before she brought him to appear before the Lord.

See I had to be weaned off unforgiveness. Then depression, thank you Mrs. Esther for opening my eyes to this, but the last process of my weaning to start my spiritual journey was Project Hope. Project Hope helped me to see my purpose, but it was a big commitment, and I like to stay balanced, so I walked away, but took a lot of wisdom on my spiritual journey. Every new beginning we have to wean ourselves off something to fully commit, so we can bear fruit. Trust the process.

Thank You, Be Blessed  
Jimmy Davis Jr.

LET ME GET A WILLIE BUCK  
10-21-21 R.I.P.

Willie was known to everyone on the row and all of the officers... You could never not like him. I've known him for over fourteen years and his neighbor for all but six months of those fourteen years.

One of his notorious sayings was "Let me get a dolla" no matter what the conversation was about or how heated the topic became, Willie would always sneak in "Let me get a dolla" or some variation of it.

Willie was a man committed to his family, faith, wife, Nebraska football and the San Francisco 49ers. Another trait of his was that smile, you could be chatting with him and then he'd say something odd and you wouldn't know he was pulling your leg until that smile slipped out. I say slipped out because he loved to kid around and not let folks know for the longest time that it was time for a dolla.

Willie and I have had many conversations between our walls or through the cell bars while gazing out the dirty, gritty windows. Out of the blue, Willie would holla out "Van, lemme ask you a question."

I'd be like "What's up Willie?"

He would say "What I want to know...can I get a Willie buck?"

Thinking back on all them years, I cannot remember him ever asking anyone else for a "Willie buck". For I believe reserving "Let me get a Willie buck" was Willie's gift to me.

Thank you eternally my friend...rest in peace

Van



**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.**



Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty  
P.O. Box 1362 Lanett, AL 36863  
Tel: (334) 499-0003  
[besthor@earthlink.net](mailto:besthor@earthlink.net) [www.whadp.org](http://www.whadp.org)

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Twass da night b4

'Twas the night before Xmas  
Man...I couldn't sleep  
thinking about all the presents  
under the Xmas tree  
anxious to know which ones  
was for me  
Happy as ever  
a smile where you can see all my teeth  
then I hear my mom say  
boy go get that egg nog out of the refrigerator for me  
I take a sip  
Mmmm that's good  
can I have some momma  
no boy this fa grown folk  
ya probably had some already  
nah get you a lil mo'  
That was a beautiful Xmas  
as I hear the Temptations sing  
"Twas the Night Before Xmas"  
and I sit watching the clock waiting on Xmas day!



N.O.