Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty

On Wings of Hope

Volume 30 Issue 3
July - Sept. 2026

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty
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Execute Justice Not People

EMOTIONS

On our journey through life we encounter challenges and perhaps the most challenging ones are our emotions. We are all different but nevertheless it is perhaps fair to say that it is our emotions which put us to the test as to who is in charge, they or us!

Let us start with the most difficult and unpleasant one called anger and his son called hate. Most of us, if not all, experience anger and many of us who have lived tragedies know about hate. The question is if they visit us naturally why should they not be welcome? There are at least a couple of reasons why they are not. How do we feel physically when we are angry and hate? Our body lets us know by feeling uptight and tense which means you are hurting yourself and not the one who caused it. As important is that when you welcome these guys you let the person causing it win and that is surely not what you want? So let them go!

The tough one is hate because he has his talons deep in our soul. People will tell you to forgive as we would want to be forgiven and that certainly sounds good but is not easy when the wound is so deep. Is there a middle road to setting ourselves free of hate? I think there is and that is to understand that to forgive does not mean to forget because the scar will always remain nor does it mean to like the one who caused it. What it does mean is that one can let go of wishing the other harm, that one might come to understand that if he could have done better he would have, that for him too there is the question behind the question and when we have reached that point the terrible burden of hate will have been lifted. We can do that!

Esther

P.S. And no, I have not spoken about righteous anger and will keep that for another time and the best of all emotions: love!

PROJECT HOPE TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY (phadp)
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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



Greetings Friends and Family,

It is with a heavy heart that I address this 3rd Quarter of 2026. Having lost a brother, mentor, friend, and so many other things J Love was to us here, (ppl say I wear a lot of hats, but J Love wore so many more and never sought any of them nor any of the glory for em) we are grieving. But two things can be true. We also speak life and celebrate the life and times we had with J Love. He taught us that. For years as our PHADP Secretary/Treasurer he organized our remembrance days, where we shared experiences and memories of those who walked this walk before us, he was always intentional with his words. He knew that the power of life and death was in the tongue, and of course he missed the mark from time to time, but his pride never kept him from correction. All of this quarter was OT for J Love, because God did a new thing for Jeffery. And Jeffery knew he wasn't going to eat of the spoils of that victory, yet he continued to praise the Lord every single day. Because when you know God's promises and how faithful and true He is, nothing in this world can take away that victory nor seperate you from His love. Every struggle, adversity, pain, and loss actually draws you closer to the source.

May the God of all comfort bring you and your house peace in this season and the next.

In Solidarity,

Bart Johnson,
Chairman, PHADP

Raw and Un-cut

To be honest with you all I did not want to write this article at all or no other articles at this point. Why? Because reality hurts and thats the truth!

I am a "Black Man" African American and although I am proud to be one it hurts, because its dangerous. Growing up in life being told your too black to tend this school, your too black to work this kind of job, your black so you can't own this or be a part of that. Honestly after thirty eight years I am worn out from simply just trying to live. I can only imagine what actually living has in store, because as Martin Luther King Jr. said in 1965, "It's all a dream.

Well guess what I am tired of sleeping and no longer need dreams to hope for the better. Today you all need to listen. Today you need to stop acting like the African American reality is just something you can continue to sweep under the rug. Today those whom have and are the cause of the African American downfall need to own up to there cruel behavior and give us justice.

Have we not shedded enough blood and tears for this country to be what it is today. As America celebrates 250 years of achievements we must take not what has and what is being done to African Americans is one of their best achievemnets in their cruel eyes. Prisons have become over-crowded simply because African Americans have nor rights in this country we are forced to call home. Whereas some are given certain privileges to mask the fact we have NO RIGHTS, reality hurts. Being black my writings are censored and often times go un un-published so it doesn't upset the audience. Well I have to admit to the audience my writings wouldn't need to be censored if the harm and hurt wasn't being caused.

Here in the State of Alabama the "death penalty" under its Capital Murder scheme is both arbitrary and capricous as being applied to the African American. Why is this so?

Judges walk into the courtrooms daily giving out convictions and sentences involving a determination made without thoughtful consideration of or regard for facts, circumstances, fixed rule rules, procedures. These judicial decisions founded on pre prejudice or preference rather than reason or fact. This t type of decision is often termed arbitrary and capricious: see Blacks Law Dictionary.

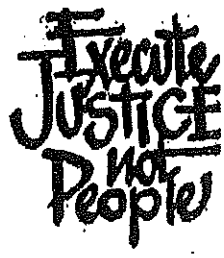
so yes this reality of being a "Black Man" hurt, because how many more years does the African American in the state of Alabama have to wait to be finally treated fair in the eyes of justice?

I can almost promise you that every African American in the State of Alabama who has been charged and also convicted for crimes such as; arson, burglary, escape, kidnapping, and robbery have either a valid reasoning because they were defending themselves from conditions of poverty caused by the State of Alabama, or they just did not commit the crime. Going into the courtroom in front of a white judge he will never consider the reasons nor facts.

This is not a dream this is reality and it hurts! The judge

This is not a dream it is reality and it hurts! The judge says you commited arson which took a life, so you are guilty, yet for the last 250 years while its happening to the African American it's all good because "that nigger don't deserve property." The judge says you commited this burglary which took a life in your flight therefore making it robbery, so you are guilty, yet for the last 250 years while everything blacks have owned somehow get taken away even to the point where many have lost their lives.

Tell me this the hardest working "being" on this Alabama soil having to commit such crimes, how and why is this possible? It's simple, those who commit the crimes needed to keep prison doors open have been denied the privilege to education, to work, to live outside of "Red Lined Communities", and to vote. And to feed themselves and their families is the reason and this reason in front of a judge isn't enough!



They have caused this problem for African Americans in Alabama so that African Americans can be their solution to wealth. Wheras the poor whites may God bless your souls because you come from those whom more than likely stood beside an African American and have been deemed rightous, so you too have been subjected to cruel punishment as well and I am sorry.

Capital Punishment as applied to the African American in Alabama is in viotalation of the U.S. Constitution Eighth and Fourteent; whereas without due process and equal protection under law , it's impossible to administer a fair trial. As of 2026 every African American in Alabama should be granted a new trial whereas if it was not for living in "red lined" communities the outcome of their life would have been different and or also the preceedings at their trials could have been conducted fairly giving reasoning to the facts. Alabama citizens and politicians listen up... You cannot be the cause of the problem and then turn around and play victim. The state of Alabama v. African American; is unconstitutional, whereas the reason was a defense for survival of the harm and hurt by the said victim "state of Alabama."

Alabama the Ugly

Why was Alabama given the name, Alabama the beautiful? Yes when you see the land and shores the scope is really nice, but if you dig deeper, you will find that Alabama is quite ugly. The laws are a mess. The lawmakers seem to make up these so-called laws as they go. Jeffery Lee's case i a point well made. Just by changing the wording of a warrant the state can change the law and for some reason the judges go with that. Alabama has a history of lawmakers going to prison as well as law enforcement, why is that? How many times has a judge in Alabama went verbatim by the words given by the state? How many times has the state of Alabama went against what the Supreme Court states? There has to be someone to keep a check on state laws and lawmakers that make them. So in a nutshell the underside of Alabama is ugly. There is a song that says "boo hoo" about the governor. So I vote we change the motto to "Alabama the Ugly"

Chris Henderson

A Christian Perspective

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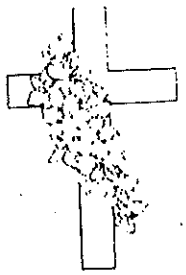
Thanking God for His grace and mercy, which has allowed me to come to you once again. Hoping to inspire you in the fight to abolish the death penalty and bring reform to the justice system. We know that with God all things are possible. Our faith and our walk will show that faith. We serve an on time God, He's never late. That's where our walk and actions and our talk comes in. We show our patience by doing the work before us. "Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience." (James 1:3)
We can't rush the things wewwahtddone. Put in the work and watch God move the pieces where they need to be and His hands will guide all things in their perfect place.
We are in a season of fighting for what's right and fair. By our hands alone it can't be done. That's why it's imperative to give it all over to God, trust and have faith that He will fix it. Then have the patient mind, body, and spirit to wait on God (Psalm 37:7) says "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." Not only do we rest, we trust, delight thyself and commit unto God. We are all agreeing that mountains will move, and move they will.
We cannot and will not lose faith and allow doubt, chaos and misdirection or misinformation shadow our thoughts. I'm patiently moving in this fight, working in this fight, joyfully waiting for the victory already won.



Thank you and Thank God!

Marcus Williams,
Vice-Chairman, PHADP

Hope What is it?

Hope is to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment. To hope is to anticipate, It's more than just dreaming,It's possessing within each one of us an expectation that someday there will be the fulfillment of that of that desire, which will become a reality.
Hope always will look to the future,It's always on tiptoes, it keeps us going, It's makes a gloom day bearable because it promises a brighter tomorrow.
Without hope, something inside all of us dies.It has been said that the average human can live several weeks without food, days without water,and minutes without oxygen,but without hope we are done
That spirit of despair has been working on a lot of the the men here on deathrow. Where they have lost their way and think there is no reason or purpose to fight for their lives. Thats just too of many reasons why some men have lost hope. Since being incarcerated here on deathrow, there has been atleast 20 men who have committed suicide in their cells or dropped their appeals in the courts, there by allowing the state of Alabama to execute them.
LordGod of Heaven and Earth, renew our strngth each day. Help us soar in victory through each battle,running with endurance and walking faithfully in this life which you have given us. Help us who have fallen from grace to get back in the race thats before us and finish what you have set and called us to do. Amen

"Resilience" Earl J. McGahee Sr.



So much pain in my heart

Where do I start
How do I keep it together
When everything has broken apart
Lose in the wilderness searching in the dark
For the light so that I can see
As I continue this journey
I realize the path isn't as long as it used to be
start by putting my faith in you
And allowing you to guide me
What was broken has beenmade a new
Spiritually, mentally and emotionally
My heart no longer consumed by anger or bitterness
was able to escape the dark and wilderness
Once I found the light
God spoke to Mike
God said everything is going to be alright
I cleansed your spirit and renewed your soul
In order to make change you had to pay a toll
Lay down your burden and take up my yoke
Your redemption will be one of the greatest mircales I ever wrote

Michal Mitchell z828

The Rest of the Problem

Let us have church, State of Alabama, who have hurted you to the point that your bitterness have defiled many? Hebrews 12:15 Your bitterness have put to silence the victim's families who want and support life and mercy, but YOU want to go beyond your protocol, for death and vengeance, Romans 12:19. Your bitterness have lead you to defile the courts and judges to believe the men you botched their executions, even their lawyers, were the reasons your death plan wasn't carried out, your root of bitterness have lead your decisions for life to be that of Pilate in Luke 23, given a chance to do right, he allowed the people to make the decision for him, even though he found no fault in Jesus, verse 4, instead of following the pattern of Pharoahs's daughter, where she restored life to someone sentenced to death, to do great things for God. May the church say Amen.

Jimmy Davis Jr.

Heavenly Father,
I place my future in Your hands.
Darkness has tried to bring delays
and close doors, but You are God
who makes a way.
I declare:
My destiny belongs to You. Open doors
no one can shut, remove every obstacle
that blocks my steps, and lead me into
Your perfect plan. Surround my journey
with Your light, and let no curse, no
attack and no scheme succeed against me.
Pop

Follow Me

Heavenly Abba,
You lead the way,
and I will follow,
I won't go astray,
I will follow,
The distractions are many I must say,
But I will follow
I know there will be times I don't obey,
But I will still follow,
The blood of Christ says it's okay
So I still still follow,
He shows me I have a role to play,
So I continue to follow,
He tells me to just focus on today,
So I still will follow,
Storms may come that cause my faith to sway,
But i will still follow,
Carrying my cross can give birth to dismay,
I will still follow;
The son who is the way,
to the truth,
That leads to life!

Tony Barksdale Z611

Selma Lost Her Son



She sat and waited patiently
time eating up the days.
Praying that this unjust system
would change its barbaric ways.

But as the clock ticked
pressure increased by the ton
fear engulfed us all.
Selma may lose her son.

I raged in furious anguish
and roared like a demonic beast.
I scattered my worldly possessions
and bared my aging teeth.

I stripped my body naked as my dad did
my neighbor laughed and made fun.
But the only thing that mattered
is that Selma didn't lose a son.

Oh this poor mother
less than a century ago.
Watched her children die above
while her river splashed below

The bridge between the m broken
due to slavery's selfish con.
She enveloped me as I dreamt
Selma wouldn't lose a son.

The hour finally came
for them to choose my brother's fate.
The sea in my heart stirred
but mother soothed its angry wake.

She stood proud as her tears fell
for her changed boy whom God had won.
Certain God had a room waiting
if Selma lost her son.

The guards smiled away
as they pushed a body out.
A white sheet draped over it
and momma gave a shout.

Cries not hers but mine
as we witnessed what they had done.
She kissed her precious boy goodbye.
Selma Lost her son.

Wanting to Heal

- Echos -

Thank you isn't enough,
for all you all have done,
visiting us in prison,
shining upon us like the Son,
echoing His love,
were any left out,
not even one,
embraced by your melodies,
filled with a meal,
welcomed by your smiles,
upon which God placed His seal,
especially when the little ones,
were given the wheel,
I saw smiles on faces,
of guys who I thought didn't feel,
thank you isn't enough,
for all you all have done,
visiting us in prison,
shining upon us like the Son,
echoing His love,
were any left out,
not even one,
since thank you isn't enough,
I'll echo what you all do,
my brothers and sisters much love,
yeah, okay, Chaplain Smoker can get some too,
no matter where you all go,
or what you may go through,
always know,
I'm praying with, for, and over you,
because thank you isn't enough,
for all you all have done,
visiting us in prison,
shining like the Son,
Echoing His love,
were any left out,
not even one...



What Is Just?

Tony Barksdale

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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.



Untitled

For many Black men, structural inequality begins early in life and too often ends in incarceration. It is not a story about individual failure alone - it is a story about systems, history, and power. The deeper question is not only how this pipeline exists, but whether equal justice under the law - Amerikkka's foundational promise - will ever truly aply to oppressed Black men.

Poverty by Design, Not by Accident

The journey often begins in neighborhoods shaped by historic policies such as redlining, employment discrimination, and unequal school funding. Though landmark civil rights victories - like those championed by Martin L. King Jr. - challenged legalized segregation, economic inequality persisted in subtler forms.

Schools in low-income Black communities frequently lack resources, experienced teachers, and safe infrastructure. Job opportunities are limited, wages are lower, and exposure to concentrated and generational. When survival is the priority long term opportunity can feel out of reach.

This is not simply about economics - it is about accumulated disadvantage.

The term "school-to-prison pipeline" describes how disciplining policies in underfunded schools often push students - disproportionately Black boys - out of classrooms and into the criminal justice system. Zero-tolerance policies, school suspensions, and on-campus policing increase early contact with law inforcement.

Data consistently shows that Black students are disciplined more harshly than their white peers for similar behaviour. Early criminalization shapes future outcomes. A suspension can lead to academic failure. Academic failure can lead to dropout. A dropout is statistically more likely to face unemployment - and interaction with the justice system.

The path narrows long before adulthood.

Encounters with law enforcement reveal stark disparities. High profile cases - such as the killing of George Floyd in 2020 - sparked national protest and forced conversations about policing practices. But beyond viral incidents lies a broader pattern: Black men are stopped, searched, arrested, and sentenced at disproportionately higher rates than white men.

The "War on Drugs," intensified during the Ronald Reagen administration, contributed significantly to mass incarceration. Although drug usage rates are similar across racial groups, enforcement has historically targeted Black communities more aggressively. Sentencing disparities - particularly for crack cocaine versus powder in the 1980's and 90's - deepened racial gaps in imprisonment.

The result? The United States incarcerates a higher percentage of its population than any other developed nation,

and Black men are imprisoned at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts.

For many Black men, incarceration does not end upon release. A criminal record restricts access to housing, employment, voting rights (in some states), and education opportunities. This creates a cycle and poverty increases the likelihood of incarceration and incarceration reinforces poverty.

Without structural reform, reentry becomes another uphill battle. The system punishes not just crimes, but futures.

The question of equal justice hinges on whether systemic reform can overcome centuries of inequality.
Yet, reform is uneven and often slow. Equal justice requires more than adjusting laws - it demands addressing housing inequality, education gaps, healthcare access, employment discrimination and implicit bias within institutions.

Amerikkka proclaims "justice for all," yet the lived experience of many Black men challenges that promise. The question is not whether equality is legally possible - the Constitution guarentees equal protection. The real question is whether political will, social awareness, and economic restructuring will allign to make it real!
Will oppressed Black men ever get equal justice in Amerikkka? The answe depends on whether this nation is willing to confront uncomfortable truths: that inequality is systemic, that justice has not been blind, and that poverty and prison are connected through policy choices - not destiny.

N.O.



The Power of Advocacy

What I am about to share is not a knock on all the hard working people that have invested their wisdom, time and tears, into prison advocacy.One powerful meaning to advocacy is supportting the cause. For prison advocacy to really go to the next level, we have to start advocating for the peopl. Yes, there is a lot wrong with these prisons, but the people on the inside have a greater need, physically, mentally and spiritually. We can't just improve the prison and neglect on the souls in those prisons Two of my brothers are great prison advocates. Their names are Ed Bloom and James Slack, For 20 years they used tools of love, conversation, encouragment, letters and visits to build a broken lost man, until I became a man of meaning. They gave me wisdom, to help rebuild my family. James" many visits helped build my confidence and vision. The results are, I have become a man of integrity. I went from vice to vision, why? Because these brothers and others, advocate for a person, that was in prison.

-Me Versus the World-

Hello everyone and may the grace and peace of God the Father and his son Jeshua The Messial not only be with you, but may it guard you and your families as well..
I was sitting here wondering,"What could I possibly do or possibly say to change the world?" I'm sure thereisn't a person (Especially a fellow believer) on this Earth who hasn't at some thaught"We (humanity) were created formore than this", As I sat here getting frustrated, I decided to grab my bible and I was led to the book of James and chapter 1 verse 27 really spoke to my thing life! We know the Holy Spirit leads us in ALL TRUTH, so here it is; The moment we gave our heart, mind and soul to God through his son Jeshua The Messial we were set-apart from the world, and no where in God's Holy word are we given the instruction to "Change the World", We are told to be the Example and reflection while this world and that start's with YOU!
Yes we may stumble, Yes we may even fall, but it is at these times that you must rememberthat YOU HAVE BEEN SET-APART, then it's why you were set-apart that should stregthen you to stand and you re-plant your feet for who you've been set-a-part for!!
Change this world!!!
Unit then, we must;
!) Kepp oneself from being contaminated by the world.
2) Refuse to let the world corrupt you.
3) Stand firm on the fact and the truth of YOU HAVE BEEN SET-APART.
We have all wandered from the truth, now let's help one another return! James 5:19-20

Execute Justice, not People!
Tont Barksdale z611

What Is Truth?

What is truth in this land of lies we call AmeriKKKa?
The land of theives and the home of the Klan. The media is full of these individuals that will tell you anything to service their agendas. AmeriKKKa, the place where the rule of deception is the tool for governmental cover ups and conspiracy theories.
Who depicts what truth is?
They lead you to believe that it's a perfect justice system, but it's controlled by fallible people. The biggest criminals in AmeriKKKa are the ones who try to tell you what's right or what's wrong. The Declaration of Independence decreed that all men are created equal; but those who wrote it owned slaves!
What is truth I ask, because no one of color was even considered a man in those times, but ignorance has taught me that, to know nothing will lead you to believe anything.

There's No Losses In Life
Only Lessons Learned!

N.O.

Statement from Jeffery Lee's Legal Team

Tonight, Alabama executed Jeffery Lee by lethal injection, even though his sentencing jury voted to spare his life. His death sentence rested solely on judicial override — an old law that Alabama has repealed. The State itself concluded this practice was wrong enough to abandon yet still put a man to death under it. **That is a moral failure, not just a legal formality.**

The execution also broke a promise. In June, after two federal courts found problems with Alabama's nitrogen hypoxia protocol, the State sought a new warrant within 24 hours. In doing so, it chose to execute Jeffery Lee by lethal injection, an equally problematic method it had told a federal court in 2018 it would not use.

A state that no longer stands behind the rule that condemned a man, but kills him under it anyway, has not delivered justice. It has revealed how little its own standards constrain it when it is determined to carry out an execution.

QUOTES FROM THE BROTHERS OF PHADP

God is not done yet, my Brother. God is in control. You are in my prayers as always, my dear and beloved Brother. Craig Newton

Jeffery has always been the guy that stops by your cell to see how you are doing and to say "God bless you" when you really need it....Chris Henderson

Faith powers light, light blankets darkness...S. Jackson Keep shining light in dark places. You are the brightest of them all. In you grace lives, God will provide mercy. In the gap we are holding on, shining light for those that can't see their way through deark times. To God be the glory...Marcus Williams

JLOVE

I've been a member of PHADP for 25 years. I joined as soon as I came off single walk in 2001. Was called up to the sub board in 2011 as an assistant coordinator and then in 2015 I came to the big board as coordinator then 2018 I was voted to become the secretary treasurer. Its been a journey of growth and learning because I was lost to most everything when I got here but God allowed for me to find some men to give what they learned over the years. Thanks for thinking of me love you always E. JLove (I had asked him to write something)

Quoting Jeffery Lee, for us JLove: "this isn't just a fight for me and my issues, it involves the whole and for ME that's what it's always been about" and so to honor his memory: Help 25 men get justice by clicking on this link https://wethejury-al.com/ and following instructions and let's get rid of jury override and finally make it retroactive! JLove, like his brothers who have gone before, will not be forgotten and as we say: Keep Hope Alive!

WHAT SOME OF JEFFERY LEE'S FRIENDS WROTE ABOUT HIM WHEN ASKED BY ESTHER

J-Love Jeffrey Lee aka J-Love came to death row while I was vice chairman of Hope. He is a tall and formidable sized person who turned out to be a gentle giant, soft spoken and eager to do something positive with his time here. A lot of people give up once they are here "at the end of the line" in prison parlance, he came in the "right way", meaning he had his eyes and ears wide open and his mouth closed. He wanted to get the lay of the land instead of trying to establish how tough a convict he was .

This impressed me as well as others who had been here a long time already because EVERYONE who comes here is afraid to one degree or another, it is simply the fear of the unknown and has nothing to do with courage or cowardice, but you don't show weakness in prison. JLove was gentle and approachable from the beginning and that takes strength! He has never once looked back. He has become a true leader among men and is universally liked/loved by the men of the row.

I have had the privilege to see him grow and bloom into a leader, advisor, example and brother, not to mention barber and huge Yankees fan! and many others are better human beings because of JLove and just watching him just be who he is. There is simply no telling how many lives he has touched and how many young men he has advised and influenced for the better through the years. It is a privilege to speak about him, thank you,

Jeff Rieber, former Chair/PHADP

One thing that for sure needs to be said is "God is not finished" that speaks to the faith of my brother and friend, Jeffery Lee. We have been friends from the jump, he said it one day (when I had just started going to church} that there was just something that clicked between us, now all these years later I understand it's the Holy Spirit working in both of us that causes us to recognize each other in that special way. His faith is admirable, trusting that God will do far beyond what we can think or ask, so in this moment, I am letting my faith out of the box as well, for JLove, and all of us here, for more than clemency, more than abolition, what that looks like. Only God can say.

Bart Johnson Chairman of phadp