

Death Penalty News from Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation

May 25, 2014

This information will appear in the death penalty section of the Olympia FOR's June-July newsletter. If you are on the Olympia FOR's mailing list you'll receive this newsletter on about May 31 or June 1. If you'd like to receive our newsletters contact us at info@olympiafor.org. The newsletter will be posted to the death penalty section of our website, www.olympiafor.org

→ If you go to the Capital City Pride festival in Sylvester Park on Saturday-Sunday June 21-22, visit the Olympia FOR's booth focusing on the death penalty. We invite you to play our classic game, "Knock Down the Myths about the Death Penalty," pick up the related fact sheets, and say hello to our friendly volunteers.

The Death Penalty Is a Peace Issue: War and the death penalty draw from the same roots and cause many of the same problems. **Both war and the death penalty:**

- Think we can solve problems by killing people
- Avoid looking for underlying systemic roots of problems
- Assume that "we" are righteous and pure, but "they" are totally evil and cannot be rehabilitated
- Practice racism, classism, xenophobia, and other kinds of oppression against "the other"
- Dehumanize other people (even calling them "monsters" instead of human beings)
- Often break laws (domestic laws and international laws) in order to carry out their killing
- Break apart the human family (within a state or nation or the world) rather than promote healing
- Waste huge amounts of money on methods that only make problems worse

Oklahoma seriously botched a lethal injection and caused a heart attack that killed the man. Here is the crucial information: Oklahoma is one of the U.S.'s major users of the death penalty. Since 1976 Oklahoma has executed 111 persons, and it had to free 10 innocent persons from death row – an appalling ratio of one innocent person for every 11 persons executed.

On April 29, 2014, Oklahoma tried to execute Clayton Lockett in a secret method using an untested combination of drugs – basically experimenting on a human being – even after a number of lawyers protested about the risks. Officials said the execution would take about 10 minutes, but Mr. Lockett began writhing and choking. He woke up and a guard yelled, "Something's wrong." Mr. Lockett suffered while the state tried for almost an hour to kill him until he died from a massive heart attack. One journalist reported that Mr. Lockett's heart essentially exploded after officials had pumped his body full of deadly chemicals. A number of knowledgeable persons declared that he had been tortured to death.

During the morning Mr. Lockett refused to cooperate with medical personnel, so he was tasered with unknown medical consequences for later that day. Later, when strapped on the gurney, the executioners could not find a vein in his arms, legs or feet, so they inserted the deadly IV into his groin, but that vein collapsed two minutes later.

Oklahoma's Supreme Court had stayed the execution in order to consider whether the secrecy about the execution method was constitutional, but Governor Mary Fallin went ahead despite the Supreme Court's decision. The Supreme Court lifted the stay when a state legislator threatened to impeach the Court's justices.

World opinion was outraged by Oklahoma's outrageous behavior in botching this execution. The overwhelming majority of the world's nations have abolished the death penalty. Gov. Fallin appointed one of her own top employees to carry out an "independent" investigation, but anyone who understands political realities knows that the investigation will not really be independent, and in any case, she is allowing only a very narrow scope for the investigation.

While the rest of the world was outraged, this passes for "justice" in the U.S. Now more than ever, we must organize from the grassroots up, change public opinion, and demand an end to this cruel punishment.

Petition urges the American Pharmacists Association, "Please join other major medical associations and ban your members from participating in executions in any way."

Doctors, nurses, emergency medical technicians, and other medical professionals – and major pharmaceutical companies – already refuse to participate in executions, but the American Pharmacists Association (APS) is allowing a small group of unregulated "compounding pharmacies" to experiment with untested lethal injection cocktails, with barbaric results in several different states. A petition from Credo Action, the social action wing of a mobile phone company, urges the APA to take a stand against letting their members participate in executions. Info: www.credoaction.com

Research says indicates 4% of U.S.'s death row prisoners could be innocent:

Already more than 140 wrongfully convicted persons have been released from death row across the U.S. Now new research shows that it's like that 4% – one in 25 – persons on death row are innocent. The study uses statistical methods to extrapolate from known data to consider the rest of the persons awaiting execution. Info: <http://tinyurl.com/kgtkp4g>

Enjoy our monthly meetings: The Olympia FOR invites you to participate in our death penalty committee's monthly meetings at a convenient location in Tumwater, typically from 7 to 9 pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Info: Emily Hammargren (360) 352-0695 deathpenalty@olympiafor.org and www.olympiafor.org/death_penalty.htm

Emily Hammargren, Chair of Olympia FOR's Committee for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, reports these accomplishments during the past 12 months:

- Our members continued to collect signatures from the public on postcards to submit to Legislators.
- We supported a very successful public hearing and press conference was held on the same day as the hearing for legislation to abolish the death penalty.
- Our members participated in the death penalty Lobby Day at the Capitol.
- We hosted viewings of the film "Paradise Lost" and "The Shawshank Redemption" to educate our members and include new supporters.
- With the Olympia Film Society, our Committee organized a showing of West of Memphis at the Capitol Theater.

- Glen researched historical process toward abolishing the death penalty and spoke to several audiences about it, including producing the Olympia FOR's May 2014 TV program about this.
- The Committee continues to table every year at the Capitol City Pride Festival.
- Last July we tabled for two days at Tacoma's Ethnic Fest.
- We co-sponsored The Peace Journey, a walk from Spokane to Olympia organized by Victoria Thorpe.
- As part of WCADP's Week of Action Against the Death Penalty, we organized a Death Penalty Information Fair at Olympia's Timberland library.
- Glen and Diana spoke to a large crowd at the Olympia library about the death penalty and specifically about wrongful convictions.
- Alice Curtis organized and led an adult education class at the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation.
- We joined statewide efforts to thank Governor Inslee after he declared a moratorium on executions in Washington.
- Two students from Evergreen joined our committee as interns to focus on public outreach and education.
- We co-sponsored *I Am Troy Davis* events at Evergreen State College and Orca Books.
- With help from our Evergreen interns, we tabled at the Rachel Corrie Foundation's Peace Works at Evergreen College.
- Glen trained a new volunteer who lives in another county to do outreach there.
- We updated current fact sheets and produced new ones.
- We educated ourselves about relevant topics during our monthly meetings.

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