

Death penalty information posted to www.olympiafor.org in early August 2014

DEATH PENALTY

The Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation – (360) 491-9093 www.olympiafor.org – has been working for decades to abolish the death penalty, along with other issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence.

The death penalty section of Olympia FOR's August-September 2014 newsletter offers a few news items and other resources about the topics listed below, and our website's death penalty section includes very much more information and live links to source materials. Please read our bimonthly newsletters and also visit www.olympiafor.org/death_penalty.htm

Our death penalty committee meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm at a convenient location in Tumwater. For location and other information contact Emily Hammargren at (360) 352-0695 deathpenalty@olympiafor.org or Glen Anderson at (360) 491-9093 glen@olympiafor.org

SEE BELOW AND ON OUR WEBSITE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THESE TOPICS:

Read the book *I Am Troy Davis* and discuss it at 6:00 pm Sunday September 21

Another botched lethal injection – this time in Arizona

Even more cases of innocence

Conservative federal judge in California rules death penalty unconstitutional

Work with non-traditional allies toward abolishing the death penalty

Washington State's "Safe and Just Alternatives" campaign to the Legislature

Debunking the "closure" myth

Read the book *I Am Troy Davis*. Discuss it at 6:00 pm Sunday September 21, 2014

Read the book *I Am Troy Davis* now. Gather with other people to discuss it on Sun. Sept. 21, 2014:

On September 21, 2011, the State of Georgia executed Troy Anthony Davis, despite strong evidence of his innocence and protests by hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. Pope Benedict XVI, President Jimmy Carter, and 51 members of Congress all appealed for clemency. The book *I Am Troy Davis* was coauthored by Jen Marlowe and Davis' sister Martina Davis-Correia. This powerful book tells the intimate story of an ordinary man caught up in an inexorable tragedy. Today – the third anniversary of his execution – people all over will be discussing the book. The Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation's Committee for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is organizing a discussion at 6:00 pm today at Traditions Café, 5th & Water, downtown Olympia. We urge people to read the book in advance and come to discuss it. We placed copies in Traditions' lending library, or you may buy a copy from an independent bookstore (preferably, to avoid the big chain

stores). Info about the book discussion: Alice Curtis (360) 943-4076 olyalice@gmail.com See much info about the death penalty at www.olympiafor.org/death_penalty.htm

More information about Troy Davis and the book: For more information about Troy Davis and the gross injustice of his case, see relevant websites (*e.g.*, www.deathpenaltyinfo.org), and see the flyer and news release posted on the death penalty part of Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org/death_penalty.htm. For more information on this case, other cases of innocence, and the death penalty overall, please see our website's "Death Penalty Information Resources" (available as a Word document and as a .pdf document).

Another botched lethal injection – this time in Arizona

Lethal injection caused suffering, gasping for breath for nearly two hours: On April 29, 2014, Oklahoma horribly botched the execution of Clayton Lockett, and now – just three months later, on July 23 – Arizona botched the execution of Joseph Rudolph Wood. Also, this past January Ohio had botched the execution of Dennis McGuire. Lethal injection is clearly **not** a nice medical procedure. It is as problematic as other ways to kill people. Joseph Rudolph Wood's execution was supposed to have taken only a few minutes, but it lasted nearly two hours, while he suffered and gasped for breath more than 600 times. Wood's execution took so long that his lawyers had time to file an emergency appeal while it was ongoing. Arizona had given him the same combination of drugs that Ohio had used in making Dennis McGuire suffer in January. More lethal injection executions were scheduled in other states, using inappropriate chemicals and flawed procedures. For information about methods of execution see the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC) amazingly comprehensive website, www.deathpenaltyinfo.org

Lawyers call for independent review of Arizona's botched execution: See the Reuters news article at <http://tinyurl.com/mrpbvk2>

Tom Tomorrow's cartoon about lethal injection: See <http://tinyurl.com/mwpm93o>

Four more cases of innocence

Innocent man spent 29 years (half of his life!) on Florida's death row: DNA testing proved that the evidence used to tie Paul C. Hildwin to the murder of Vronzettie Cox actually belonged to her boyfriend. Also, witnesses who could have proven Hildwin's innocence were never called to testify at the original trial, even though they had reported what they saw to investigators at the time. More people have been exonerated from death row in Florida than in any other state. Hildwin's case shows why we should **not** speed up executions, but in a horrible irony, in 2013 Florida passed the "Timely Justice Act," which would speed up the pace of executions and result in executing more innocent persons.



Two more cases of innocence: While the criminal "justice" system continues to make serious mistakes, an online petition effort through www.change.org helped free Mark Woodworth and Ryan Ferguson. Mark Woodworth spent 17 years behind bars for a murder he didn't commit. His conviction was overturned twice, and finally on July 15, 2014, prosecutors said they were dropping all charges against him. Mark was only 16

years-old in 1990 when his neighbor was shot and killed in her home, and three years later he was indicted for her killing. Soon it was revealed that **prosecutors withheld evidence that pointed to his innocence**. In a separate case in the same state (Missouri), Ryan Ferguson was another innocent victim of our criminal “justice” system. He spent nearly a decade in prison for a murder that he did not commit. See

<http://tinyurl.com/lcg92hn>

Rodney Reed’s struggle for justice continues, while Texas refuses to test all of the DNA that could prove his innocence: If the criminal “justice” system really sought truth and justice, it would halt Rodney Reed’s execution and test the DNA that could prove him innocent. Instead, in July 2014, senior judge Doug Shaver did not even pause after the prosecutor finished speaking before scheduling Reed’s execution for January 14, 2015. This despite the fact that Texas has agreed to test less than all of the relevant DNA. The gross injustice is so severe that eight retired federal and state judges (representing six states around the U.S., including Texas, and both the Republicans and Democrats) took the unusual step of filing a friend-of-the-court brief with the U.S. Supreme Court asking that Reed’s appeal be heard. By the way, Reed, who is African-American, was convicted for raping and murdering Stacey Stites, a white woman, with whom he was having a consensual relationship. There is strong evidence that Stites was killed by her fiancé, a local police officer in the same town, who is currently serving time for raping a woman while he was on duty. However, the police never investigated compelling evidence about Stites’ murder. Reed was convicted by an all-white jury. See more information at the website of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty (CEDP), www.nodeathpenalty.org

Conservative federal judge in California rules death penalty unconstitutional

In July 2014 a conservative federal judge ruled California’s death penalty law unconstitutional: In 2003 George W. Bush had appointed Cormac Carney to U.S. District Court. On July 16, 2014, Judge Carney ruled that California’s death penalty violates the Eighth Amendment prohibition of “cruel and unusual punishment.” See info posted at the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP), www.ncadp.org; at a *San Francisco Gate* news article, <http://tinyurl.com/no4fxmz>; at a *Huffington Post* article, <http://tinyurl.com/gzty24q>; and reporter Bob Egelko’s July 16 article posted at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, www.sfchronicle.com. (He is at beigelko@sfchronicle.com) Also see more information from California’s statewide abolition organization, Death Penalty Focus, www.deathpenalty.org

While other judges had previously criticized the death penalty’s arbitrariness, delays, etc., U.S. District Judge Cormac Carney of Santa Ana said that for most of the 748 persons currently on California’s death row, “systemic delay has made their execution so unlikely that the death sentence carefully and deliberately imposed by the jury has been quietly transformed into one no rational jury or legislature could ever impose: life in prison, with the remote possibility of death.”

More than 900 convicted murderers have been sentenced to death in California since 1978. However, only 13 have been executed; 94 have died from illnesses, suicide or other causes; and 39 have had their sentences overturned. The federal judge said that more than 40 percent of the others have been on Death Row for more than 19 years. One of these, Ernest Jones, had filed the appeal in which the judge ruled. Nobody has been executed in California since February 2006, when a federal judge found a number of serious flaws in the state’s lethal injection procedures. Although Judge Carney commuted Ernest Jones’ death sentence to life in prison without parole (LWOP), he did not issue a statewide order. He did lambaste the “dysfunctional administration” of California’s death penalty system,” and said that a lack of funding made it worse.

Work with non-traditional allies toward abolishing the death penalty

Work with non-traditional allies – including conservatives – toward abolishing the death penalty: One option for us to explore is the exciting potential of working with “nontraditional” allies – persons and

constituencies and organizations that we usually do not work with. See this link for information about Equal Justice USA (EJUSA), which has been doing this: <https://www.newtactics.org/search/gss/ejusa> Click this link, scroll down somewhat, and click the link to watch the short video from CPAC (the nationwide conference of political conservatives) and see that we have allies who are politically conservative:

<https://www.newtactics.org/comment/7049#comment-7049> On May 14, 2014, *Newsweek* published an in-depth article about conservative support for repealing the death penalty. **[“An Unlikely Conservative Cause: Abolish the Death Penalty”](http://tinyurl.com/k4gs2x4)** (<http://tinyurl.com/k4gs2x4>) features Equal Justice USA’s new group, *Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty*, and a local group, *North Carolina Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty*. A growing number of conservatives – including former congressman Ron Paul, evangelical leader Sam Rodriguez, and conservative icons Richard Viguerie and Oliver North – have been coming out against the death penalty. The growing movement for repealing the death penalty crosses ideological barriers and party lines! Abolitionist organizations must do more to reach out and devise new strategies and efforts to appeal to specific diverse constituencies. Equal Justice USA is especially strategic and skilled at this. See information at www.ejusa.org

Kansas Republicans remove death penalty support from 2014 platform: Across the country, more conservatives and libertarians have been reconsidering their support for the death penalty. Nowhere is that more evident than in Kansas. Even though there is a long tradition in Kansas of prominent Republicans opposing the death penalty, the Kansas Republican Party nevertheless had a pro-death penalty plank in its platform. That changed in April 2014, when the Republican Party removed the death penalty completely from its newly published 2014 platform. Mary Sloan, Executive Director of the Kansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (KCADP), applauded the move. She said, “The death penalty is a broken system that is fiscally irresponsible and can put innocent life at risk. It comes as no surprise that more people across the political spectrum are rethinking their support for it.” KCADP and **Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty** have partnered to organize events on the death penalty with a number of conservative organizations, including local Pachyderm and Tea Party groups. See more information posted in the Kansas portion of *Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty*, <http://conservativesconcerned.org/in-the-states/kansas/>

Kansas Libertarian Party’s 2014 statewide platform calls for abolishing the death penalty: It states, “As men and women are fallible and imperfect, and can and do make mistakes, the death penalty should be abolished.”

In fact, more than 90 million Americans across the political spectrum oppose the death penalty and want to end it. The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP), Equal Justice USA (EJUSA), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Amnesty International (AIUSA), the Campaign to End the Death Penalty (CEDP), and other organizations are working hard on this. See their contact information listed in the document “Death Penalty Information Resources” posted on www.olympiafor.org/death_penalty.htm We invite you to [sign NCADP’s “Halt All Executions” petition](#), work with the Olympia FOR’s Committee for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, and take other actions.

Washington State’s “Safe and Just Alternatives” campaign to the Legislature

The Washington Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (WCADP, www.abolishdeathpenalty.org) has been working for decades. For the past several years WCADP has been working with the ACLU of Washington (www.aclu-wa.org) and others, including the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation’s Committee for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (www.olympiafor.org), to promote the “Safe and Just Alternatives” (SJA) campaign to mobilize people statewide to urge the Washington State Legislature to repeal Washington’s death penalty law. See fact sheets, personal stories, and other resources at www.sjawa.org.

Debunking the “closure” myth

This is a long time to make victims’ families wait for "closure" The U.S. government’s Bureau of Justice Statistics issued a report titled, “**Capital Punishment, 2012.**”

(www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4991) The report noted that the average time between sentencing and execution in 2012 was 15.8 years. This proves that our “justice” system is wrong when it tells a grieving family that their only solace will be the death penalty, because on average they have to wait nearly 16 years for the promised “closure.” A great many families must wait even longer. And, of course, many families find that executions never bring them the “closure” that was promised, because the families’ suffering cannot be healed by killing yet another person. Families need other services rather than another cycle of violence.