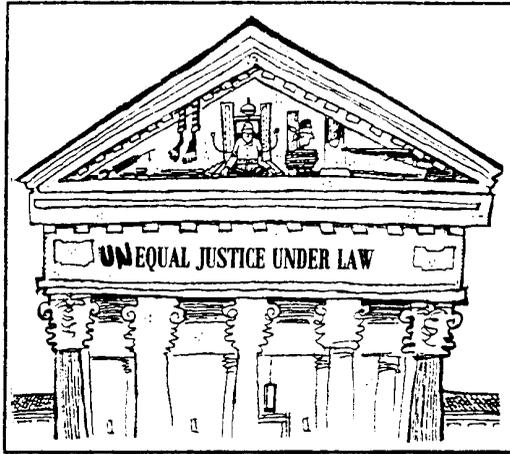


## APPROACHING 40 YEARS OF EXECUTIONS



JUNE 29, 1972  
JULY 2, 1976

**June 29th: The anniversary of the 1972 FURMAN v. GEORGIA decision**, in which the U.S. Supreme Court found the death penalty to be applied in an "arbitrary and capricious manner." Over 600 prisoners had their death sentences reduced to life imprisonment, and all states had to rewrite their death penalty laws.

**July 2nd: The anniversary of the 1976 GREGG v. GEORGIA decision**, which allowed executions to resume in the United States.

The four days between these two historic anniversaries provide a natural opportunity for an annual demonstration of conscience against prisoner executions. During these four days, activists from around the nation and the world join in solidarity with those who come to Washington, D.C. for "Starvin' for Justice," the annual "Fast-and-Vigil" in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. We protest the injustice of the death penalty while educating the public about the need for better public policy.

### BUT MURDER VICTIM FAMILIES WANT THE DEATH PENALTY, DON'T THEY?



Two of the founders of the Abolitionist Action Committee's Annual Fast & Vigil are, in fact, murder victim family members who reject the death penalty. Stop back by and meet Bill Pelke, whose grandmother was murdered by four teenage girls, one of whom became the youngest female on death row in the United States. Or talk to Marietta Jeager-Lane, whose daughter was murdered. Other family members of murder victims, as well as death row family members and death row survivors are with us at this event. As two of the three initiators of the Annual Fast & Vigil, along with Rick Halperin, Bill and Marietta welcome you!

The AAC thanks everyone who has made this event possible, including the many sponsoring organizations and individuals who have made financial and other contributions. They are far too many to list equitably here. Please find a complete list of our co-sponsors on our web page at [www.ABOLITION.org](http://www.ABOLITION.org) and at our headquarters during the event - inside the United Methodist Church building, next door to the Supreme Court.

Please support the Annual Fast & Vigil to Abolish the Death Penalty and other activities of the Abolitionist Action Committee (AAC).

Visit [www.ABOLITION.org](http://www.ABOLITION.org).

*"I feel morally and intellectually obligated to simply concede that the death penalty experiment has failed...*

*...From this day forward,*

*I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death."*

*Supreme Court Justice  
Harry A. Blackmun,  
February 22, 1994*

Until this time, Blackmun was a supporter of the death penalty. He spent more than 20 years trying to make it work. He couldn't. In April, 2008, Justice Kennedy wrote (in *Baze v. Rees*) that he also has changed his mind. Do you know enough about the practice of the death penalty to decide whether or not you support it? See inside!

**LA PENA DE MUERTE**

**Es Racista**

**No es un impedimento contra la violencia**

**Se dirige contra los pobres**

**Es más costosa que la cadena perpetua**

**No regresa la vida de las víctimas**

**Mata a inocentes**

**Enseña al mundo la venganza**

**Es un abuso de los derechos humanos**

**¡RENÚNCIALA!**

# WHY END THE DEATH PENALTY?

Whether you are FOR or AGAINST the death penalty – or still not sure – take the time to learn about how the criminal justice system actually works in the United States.

**PLEASE JOIN US HERE AT  
THE U.S. SUPREME COURT  
JUNE 29 THROUGH JULY 2  
EACH EVENING AT 6:00 P.M.  
FOR SPECIAL SPEAKERS WHO  
TALK FROM EXPERIENCE....**

## GET THE FACTS, THEN DECIDE:



- **INNOCENCE:** The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that it is constitutional to execute an INNOCENT person - as long as they had a "fair" trial (Herrera v Collins)! Consider that over 140 wrongly convicted persons released from death row so far since 1972 were ALL considered to have received "fair" trials! Should the government really be trusted with the power to kill?

- **WRONGFUL EXECUTIONS:** U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia once wrote that there has not been "a single case - not one - in which it is clear that a person was executed for a crime he did not commit. If such an event had occurred in recent years, we would not have to hunt for it; the innocent's name would be shouted from the rooftops." Some of the nation's best investigative journalists and leading newspapers have recently exposed grave errors leading to the execution of innocent people. Read about Carlos De Luna, Larry Griffin, Ruben Cantu, and Todd Willingham. In 2011, the case of Troy Davis brought worldwide attention to possible execution of the innocent. Was Justice Scalia wrong?

- **COST:** It costs 2 to 6 times as much to kill one person than to incarcerate for life. (In Florida, it is \$3.2 million versus \$750,000.) This cost is weighted UP FRONT - in the initial trial and sentencing phase, not in the appeals process as so many believe. Cash-strapped states like California are realizing that this is not a good use of tax dollars.

- **PUBLIC OPINION:** Surveys consistently show that - when offered the alternative of life without the possibility of parole for a minimum of 25 years, plus restitution for the victim's family - support for the death penalty drops below 50%.

- **RACISM:** Shouldn't the "ultimate penalty" be applied fairly, without regard to race or class? Well, it isn't. When the race of the VICTIM is white, the perpetrator of the crime is 4 to 11 times MORE likely to receive a death sentence. In McCleskey v.

Kemp, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racism in the legal system is "inevitable," and declined to do anything about it. Think about that as you contemplate the words carved into the front of the building: "Equal Justice Under Law."

- **NO DETERRENCE:** Most death penalty proponents concede that executions do NOT deter others from committing murder. In fact, studies show that the murder rate increases slightly after a highly publicized execution. States without the death penalty consistently have lower murder rates - as do countries throughout the world which have abolished the death penalty.

- **A POLITICIAN'S TOOL:** Politicians often brag that they are "tough on crime" because they support the death penalty. This is an effective sound bite, but it's not factual. If they were truly tough on crime they'd use your tax dollars to PREVENT crime - instead of to punish after the fact. OVER 94% of all criminal justice dollars are spent AFTER a crime has been committed. How much does that leave for programs which address the root causes of violent crime -- in other words, prevention? NOT MUCH!

- **THE TIDE IS TURNING:** 18 states and the District of Columbia have abolished the death penalty already. In recent years, those states have included Maryland, Connecticut, Illinois, New Mexico, New Jersey and New York. Who will be next?

## YOU ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE, IF YOU...

- **EDUCATE YOURSELF:** See the suggested readings and websites below. There is a wealth of information in books and on the internet. Research the issue to see if what you believe about the death penalty is actually true.

- **USE YOUR CITIZENSHIP:** If you are U.S. citizen vote for candidates who support abolition of the death penalty. WRITE to elected officials (regardless of party affiliation) and ask them to consider alternatives to the death penalty.

- **BE VISIBLE:** Wear the message on a button or a shirt. Put a sticker on your car and in your office. Plant seeds and spark conversations about the death penalty. For merchandise, visit [shop.amnestyusa.org](http://shop.amnestyusa.org).

- **SIGN A PETITION or WRITE A LETTER:** Sign a petition for a "time out" on executions or write letters or emails for clemency in upcoming scheduled executions, no matter what state or country you live in. For online actions, visit [www.ncadp.org](http://www.ncadp.org).

- **ASK YOUR RELIGIOUS LEADER TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:** Almost every organized religion is opposed to the death penalty. Ask your church or spiritual leader to address the issue from the pulpit, and/or in other organized discussion venues. Contact People of Faith Against the Death Penalty at 919-933-7567 or [www.pfadp.org](http://www.pfadp.org) for related materials.

- **INVITE A SPEAKER WITH EXPERIENCE TO YOUR LOCAL GROUP:** Consider inspirational speakers on various aspects of this complex issue. Murder victim family members, death row survivors, and other informed speakers are available to come to your area. For more information call 800-973-6548.

- **JOIN A GROUP IN YOUR AREA:** Contact the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty at 800-973-6548 or go to [www.ncadp.org](http://www.ncadp.org) to use its free referral service to find a state or national organization near you.

## GET INVOLVED!

### RECOMMENDED READING:

*Among the Lowest of the Dead*  
David von Drehl

*Dead Man Walking*  
Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ

### WEBSITES:

[www.ncadp.org](http://www.ncadp.org)  
[www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)  
[www.journeyofhope.org](http://www.journeyofhope.org)  
[www.MVFR.org](http://www.MVFR.org)  
[www.MVFHR.org](http://www.MVFHR.org)  
[www.abolition.org](http://www.abolition.org)



The **Abolitionist**  
**Action**  
**Committee**

We are an ad-hoc group of individuals committed to highly visible and effective public education for alternatives to the death penalty through nonviolent direct action.

Contact us to get involved or make a contribution to our efforts.

**Abolitionist Action Committee**  
**P.O. Box 89, Ghent, NY 12075**  
**Call toll-free: 800-973-6548**  
**[www.ABOLITION.org](http://www.ABOLITION.org)**