

## SPEAKER BIOS - Journey of Hope...from violence to healing (JOH) TEXAS 2017

### BILL PELKE, ALASKA

**Murder Victim Family Member**

**President and Cofounder of JOH**



Bill authored a book entitled *Journey of Hope...From Violence to Healing*, which details the May 14, 1985 murder of his grandmother Ruth Elizabeth Pelke, a Bible teacher, by four teenage girls. Paula Cooper who was deemed to be the ringleader was sentenced to die in the electric chair by the state of Indiana. She was fifteen years old at the time of the murder. Bill originally supported the sentence of death for Cooper, but went through a spiritual transformation in 1986 after praying for love and compassion for Paula Cooper and her family. He became involved with an international crusade on Paula's behalf and in 1989 her sentence was commuted to sixty years in prison. Bill, a retired steelworker, has dedicated his life to working for abolition of the death penalty. He has shared his story of love and compassion and the healing power of forgiveness thousands of times in more than forty states and fifteen countries with the Journey.

### GEORGE WHITE, VIRGINIA

**Murder Victim Family Member, Wrongfully Convicted Exoneree**

**Chairman of the Board, Journey Ambassador and Cofounder of JOH**



On February 27, 1985 in Enterprise, AL, George and his wife, Char, experienced firsthand the insanity of murder when a masked gunman entered his office and shot the pair repeatedly during an armed robbery. A horrific, twisted nightmare began and lasted for more than seven years as George went from a survivor of a violent crime and husband of a murder victim, to a suspect, accused, indigent defendant facing the death penalty, convicted murderer sentenced to life, and innocent man exonerated. Convicted in 1987, the conviction was overturned in 1989 but it took until 1992 to uncover and confront the prosecution with the proof of his innocence and a judge ordered that the charge be forevermore dismissed, exonerating him. George speaks of his own often torturous journey from violence and hatred to healing. "I believe society's laws must offer relief for our pain, anger and loss and afford us protection from those who would harm us; however, I reject the death penalty as a failed solution not only to heal the wounds of our loss, but as bad public policy, morally, socially and economically. Together, let us find a better way."

### MARIETTA JAEGER-LANE, FLORIDA

**Murder Victim Family Member**

**Board Member and Cofounder of JOH**



Marietta's 7-year-old daughter Susie was kidnapped from the family's tent during a camping vacation. For a year, the family knew nothing of Susie's whereabouts. During that horrible time, Marietta had to find her way from "fury to forgiveness" On the first anniversary of Susie's disappearance, the kidnapper telephoned to taunt Marietta and inadvertently revealed sufficient information to enable the FBI to identify and then arrest him. Marietta asked that the mentally ill man be given the alternative allowed in capital cases: a mandatory life sentence instead of the death penalty. Only then was the kidnapper willing to confess to Susie's murder, as well as to the deaths of three other young persons in the same county. He committed suicide just hours later.

## SUEZANN BOSLER, FLORIDA

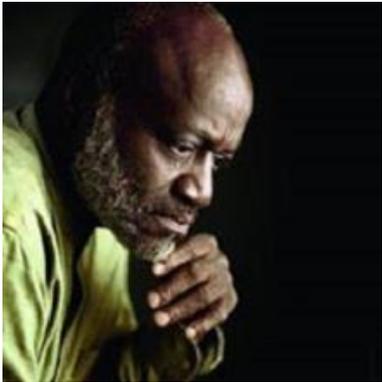
**Murder Victim Family Member  
Board Member and Cofounder of JOH**



On December 22, 1986, SueZann Bosler and her father, Rev. Billy Bosler, were attacked in the church parsonage by an intruder. Rev. Bosler was stabbed 24 times. SueZann, was herself stabbed in the back and head and left for dead. While lying on the floor pretending to be dead, she heard the intruder ransack the house as she watched her father take his last breath. A Brethren minister, Rev. Bosler had once told SueZann that if he was ever murdered he would not want his killer to receive the death penalty. On her father's behalf, SueZann worked for 10 1/2 years to spare the life of his murderer, James Bernard Campbell. She voiced her opposition to the death penalty throughout three trials and two sentencings. Her efforts put her at stark odds with Florida prosecutors and judges, who at one point threatened her with contempt of court if she revealed her views to the jury. On June 13, 1996, her efforts were successful and his sentence was commuted to three consecutive life terms. "Being able to point to him at that moment, and express my forgiveness, was like having a weight lifted from my shoulders,"

## SHUJAA GRAHAM, MARYLAND

**Exonerated Death Row Survivor, Murder Victim Family Member  
Social Activist, Member of Witness to Innocence**



As a teenager, Shujaa lived through the Watts riots and experienced the police occupation of his community. In and out of trouble, he spent much of his adolescent life in juvenile institutions, until at age 18, he was sent to Soledad Prison. He came of age, mentored by the leadership of the Black Prison movement. He taught himself to read and write, studied history and world affairs, and became a leader of the Black Panther Party and growing movement within the California prison system. In 1973, Shujaa was framed in the murder of a prison guard. As a recognized leader within and without the prison, the community became involved in his defense, and supported him through 4 trials. Shujaa and his co-defendant, Eugene Allen, were sent to San Quentin's death row in 1976, after a second trial in San Francisco. The DA systematically excluded all African American jurors, and in 1979, the California Supreme Court overturned the death conviction. After spending three years on death row, Shujaa, continued to fight for his life. A third trial ended in a hung jury, and after a fourth trial, he was found innocent. As Shujaa often says, he won his freedom and affirmed his innocence despite the system.

## TERRI STEINBURG, VIRGINIA

**Mother of a Son Condemned to Death**



At the age of 20, Terri 's son, Justin Wolfe, an ex-high school football player and normal, average, all American, suburban kid was sentenced to death for a murder he did not commit. In 2002, he became the youngest man on Virginia's death row. At first Terri and her family, and even Justin believed that somehow the justice system would set this right. Instead they began a desperate quest to save Justin's life and bring him home.

Justin's death sentence was vacated in 2011 however the fact that he remains in prison to this day continues the ongoing tragedy and failure of a broken system. Terri has traveled with the Journey all over the world, speaking out not only on behalf of Justin but for all of those still on death rows and the families that continue to suffer at the hands of a broken system.

## DERRICK JAMISON, OHIO

EXONERATED DEATH ROW SURVIVOR

Member Witness to Innocence



Derrick Jamison was an innocent man who spent nearly 20 years on Ohio's death row for a murder and robbery he did not commit. Evidence was withheld by the prosecution and based on false testimony that was presented, Derrick was convicted in 1985. In February 2005, a Ohio Common Pleas dismissed all charges against Derrick, three years after his conviction was overturned. Two federal courts ruled had that the prosecution's actions denied Derrick a fair trial.

Today, Derrick is fully aware of the inequality of the criminal justice system. "There is a double standard when it comes to justice in our judicial system, especially with wrongful conviction," he says. "If you are a minority or a low-income citizen, the pursuit of justice can be an elusive one. But if you are rich, it happens overnight."

## BILL BABBITT, CALIFORNIA

Brother of an Executed Man



Bill Babbitt once supported the death penalty. He also really trusted in the police, but when he realized that his brother, Manny, could possibly be involved in the death of an elderly woman he was filled with anguish and fear that if he contacted the police, they or the state of California might kill the brother he dearly loved. Manny Babbitt, a decorated Marine, had brought the horror of war home with him after two tours in Vietnam. He was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Bill convinced himself to place his trust in the justice system and that it would recognize the reality of his brother's mental illness. Manny would be held accountable and receive the psychological help that he needed. Bill literally led the police to his brother believing that justice would be served and Manny would get the help he needed. Bill was certain the state would not kill his little brother. He was wrong. Bill Babbitt was present at San Quentin prison when at one minute after midnight on May 4th, 1999 the state of California executed Manny. With a guilt that he lives with every day, Bill now travels the world advocating against the death penalty.

## DR JACK SULLIVAN, OHIO

Murder Victim Family Member



The Reverend Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr. is the Senior Pastor of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Findlay, OH. He recently completed service as Executive Director of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR), the nation's largest victims' families-led anti-death penalty organization. Dr. Sullivan's life and leadership have been forever influenced by the 1997 murder of his younger sister, Jennifer. In the traumatic days, weeks and months that followed Jennifer's untimely death, his family steadfastly rejected any notion that the killer(s) be sentenced to death if apprehended. No one was ever arrested in Jennifer's death,

## AMI LYN WHITE, TEXAS

**Murder Victim Family Member**



Ami remembers being told that her mother, Cathy, was murdered when she was five. She speaks to the pain and despair that she felt then and in the years since. She recognizes that "those on death row and those who are executed have families too, those family members, those children experience the same kind of pain and devastation that I felt. To me, the most premeditated murder of all is the death penalty. It only creates more victims, more heartache, more pain."

Ami has spoken publicly on issues such as Restorative Justice, Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue, (VOMD)) Victims Services, and Death Penalty Abolition. She formerly served as president of the Texas Chapter of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation and was featured in a documentary "Meeting a Killer" where she met face-to-face with one of the men who murdered her mother.

## RANDY GARDNER, UTAH

**Brother of an Executed Man  
Board Member JOH**



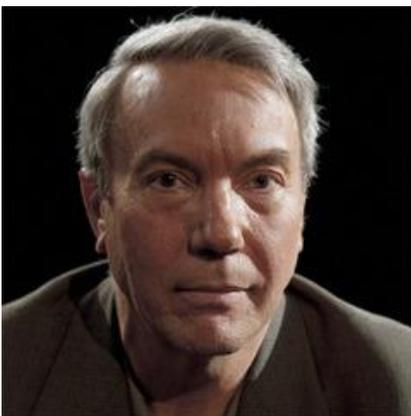
Randy's world was irreparably changed in 2010, when his brother Ronnie was executed by a firing squad in the state of Utah. He and his family experienced the "collateral damage" of the death penalty done to the loved ones of the those who are executed. Randy believes in accountability, but not by more killing.

Randy has since dedicated himself to channeling his pain into action and striving to embrace forgiveness to those who played a part in the execution process. He believes in public education will bring about an end to the death penalty.

Joining the Journey, he has now traveled all over the world speaking out and sharing his story of hurt, redemption, and hope to college students, lawyers, judges, clergymen, and community leaders. He knows the brokenness of a system that still embraces the Death Penalty.

## DAVID KACZYNSKI, TEXAS

**Brother of Ted Kaczynski  
Board Member JOH**



In August 1995 David Kaczynski's wife Linda asked him a difficult question: "Do you think your brother Ted is the Unabomber?" He couldn't be, David thought, not the brilliant older brother he had grown up admiring. Yes, he had shown signs of mental illness and had cut off ties with the family and become a recluse. But as the couple pored over the Unabomber's seventy-eight-page manifesto, David couldn't rule out the possibility. It slowly became clear to them that Ted was likely responsible for mailing the seventeen bombs that killed three people and injured many more. Wanting to prevent further violence, David made the agonizing decision to turn his brother in to the FBI. During Ted's trial David worked hard to save Ted from the death penalty, and since then he has been a leading activist in the anti-death penalty movement and on mental health issues. In *Every Last Tie*, David has written a book that is a highly personal and powerful memoir of his family and also looks at the links between mental illness and violence.