

# California People of Faith

## Working Against the Death Penalty

*Educating and Mobilizing Faith Communities to Act to Abolish the Death Penalty in California. Fall 2008*

### **Weekend of Faith in Action** *Against the Death Penalty*

Join CPF on **November 7, 8, 9** and during the Catholic Church's **Respect Life Month** in October to help end the death penalty.

California People of Faith's "Weekend of Faith in Action Against the Death Penalty" is the perfect time to **TAKE ACTION** against the death penalty. We're encouraging faith communities across California to bring this issue to their faith communities during November 7, 8, and 9 and also during the Catholic Church's "Respect Life Month" in October. These resources are for you to use at your place of worship as we work together to end the death penalty in California.

**Speakers** - CPF will work with you to find a speaker that fits your audience. This may include someone from your faith tradition, a murder victim's family member, an exonerated person, or death penalty expert. Please let us know what will work best for your event.

**Bulletin/Newsletter Inserts** - Education is key to abolishing the death penalty. This can be as simple as putting information about the death penalty in a newsletter or bulletin at your place of worship. Contact CPF for sample inserts.

**Information Table** - CPF is happy to set up a table with death penalty information after a service or during an event at your place of worship. We'll bring information from family members of murder victims, faith-based statements, and important myths and facts about the death penalty.

**Sample Prayers and Tips** - Praying for an end to the death penalty and for family members of murder victims is an important way to include this issue at your place of worship. Please contact CPF if you're in need of sample prayers and tips for preaching about the death penalty.

**Live Play Performance** - Actress/writer Marion Scherer's powerful one-woman show, *A Prison of the Mind*, probes the conscience of her audience as she asks not, "do you believe in the death penalty" but rather, "will this heal your heart"? Approximately 45-50 minutes long with audience discussion afterward. The author can mediate this discussion or individual groups can be formed to facilitate more participation. This play encourages dialogue. The play is intense and emotional - everyone's opinions are welcome. The discussion after the play is as important as the play itself!

**Powerpoint Presentation** - This Powerpoint presentation covers the main arguments, including from a religious perspective, against the death penalty. It is great for classes or group presentations.

**Films** - CPF has numerous films available for you to borrow. These include, **Interview with an Executioner** (Running time: 13 minutes) about a former warden turned anti-death penalty activist, **A Culture of Life and the Death Penalty** (Running time: 15 minutes) which offers a Catholic perspective on the death penalty, **At the Death House Door** (Running time: 95 minutes) which offers a personal look at the life of a former death row chaplain, **The Freedom Files: Freedom to Live** (Running time: 27 minutes) which tells the stories of people personally affected by the capital punishment system, **The Exonerated** (Running time: 90 minutes) which tells the true stories of six people sent to Death Row for crimes they did not commit, and **Race to Execution** (Running time: 53 minutes) which is a provocative portrait of two Death Row inmates, exposing how race infects America's death penalty system.

**Your Own Ideas** - Please contact CPF with any other ideas you have and we'll be happy to work with you.

### **State Commission Releases Findings on the Death Penalty**

By CPF Steering Committee Member Curt Feese

On June 30, 2008, the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice issued its final report. In 2004, the Commission was established to study the criminal justice system in California to: determine past failings, examine ways of making improvements, and make recommendations for the just, fair, and accurate application and administration of criminal justice in California. Many findings have been previously released and legislation proposed, but our State politicians have been unwilling to enact these reforms, primarily because many of them don't want to appear "soft on crime."

All 22 members of the Commission agree that our capital punishment system is dysfunctional. Since the death penalty was restored in California in 1978, 98 inmates have left death row because their convictions or sentences were overturned, 38 died of natural causes, 14 committed suicide, and 13 were executed. The Commission's final report stresses the financial toll on California of our current death penalty system. Using conservative projections, the Commission estimates that the current capital punishment system costs \$137 million per year. If the proposed reforms needed to bring the current system to more fair and accurate results were implemented, the cost would be \$233 million per year.

However, the Commission points out that a system that imposes a maximum penalty of lifetime incarceration instead of the death penalty would cost only about \$11 million per year. In addition to the huge annual costs of the current death penalty system, money has been budgeted to expand and renovate Death Row at San Quentin -- currently estimated at \$400 million. Can California afford the cost of vengeance?

To read the full article, go to [www.californiapeopleoffaith.org/curtfeese.html](http://www.californiapeopleoffaith.org/curtfeese.html)

To learn more about the CCFAJ, go to [www.ccfaj.org](http://www.ccfaj.org)

For information on CPF activities statewide, visit [www.californiapeopleoffaith.org](http://www.californiapeopleoffaith.org).

## CPF at Work

### Orange County

The CPF Orange County Chapter is co-sponsoring *Dialogue on the Death Penalty: Faith Leaders Discussing Capital Punishment*.

Ordained faith leaders from the Orange County area are invited to participate in this clergy-only luncheon on Wednesday, October 29th from 10am - 2:30pm at the Atrium Hotel in Irvine.

This is an opportunity for ordained leaders from different faith communities across Orange County to reflect on capital punishment. Participating clergy will be invited to discuss the challenges they face when broaching the issue of capital punishment with their congregants, discuss religious texts, and share strategies and tactics for opposing the death penalty. Attendees will also receive a comprehensive resource packet.

To RSVP by Wednesday, October 22nd please contact Stefanie at 415-243-0143 or stefanie@deathpenalty.org.

### San Diego

Due in large part to the persistent efforts of Ronnie Friedman Barone, the San Diego County Democratic party central committee has adopted a resolution calling for the abolition of the death penalty both in California and the federal level. It has also been reported that several other county Democratic committees have adopted or will be considering similar resolutions. The resolution is posted at: [www.sddemocrats.org/resolutions.htm](http://www.sddemocrats.org/resolutions.htm).

Bringing this issue to the State Democratic convention will provide a great opportunity to keep the death penalty abolition issue on the policy agenda.

## Donations Needed for San Quentin Inmate's DNA Test

Gary Hines has been an inmate on San Quentin State Prison's Death Row for over twenty years. He has always maintained his innocence. When he was convicted, there were no DNA tests and evidence was missing in the case. Since then, a DNA test was done but proved inconclusive.

Gary is now trying to raise enough money to have another DNA test done to prove his innocence.

This case was brought to CPF's attention by two of our dedicated Steering Committee Members. They report that, at this point, Gary's lawyer has a fund of \$1,165 thanks to help from the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet in Orange County, a group of nuns in Australia, as well as individual donors.

However, the amount that is needed to have a DNA tests done is \$5,200, leaving a deficit of over \$4000.00.

"Gary is a kind, faith-filled person who has proved to be a good friend. He needs our prayers," says Marilyn Angarola, a member of Holy Name of Mary Church in San Dimas.

**If you would like to help Gary Hines get a new DNA test or have questions about his case, please contact his lawyer, Scott Williams, at 2030 Addison Street, Suite 410, Berkeley, CA 94704. His phone number is (510) 548-7070.**



Carol O'Connor Duncanson with her daughter, Lisa.

## Murder Victim's Family Speaks Out Against Death Penalty

Carol O'Connor Duncanson's mother, Bernice O'Connor, was 82 years old when she was raped, beaten, strangled and stabbed to death in her Detroit home. On May 9, 2008 Carol and her daughter, Lisa, joined CPF at Orange County's Mater Dei High School to speak about why they are against the death penalty. Carol and Lisa are members of *California Crime Victims for Alternatives to the Death Penalty*.

*"Where the death penalty is an option, the victim's family is apt to be drawn into the spirit of vengeance with the promise that an execution will give them 'justice'. This prolongs their grief and pain through the years of court proceedings. We are grateful that Michigan does not have the death penalty, and did not give us a sentence of prolonged grief or hold out a false promise that an execution would make it all better. Holding on to hate and vengeance will not help us heal. We are thankful that our mother raised us to believe in forgiveness, because if hatred had been added to our burden of pain, loss, and grief after her brutal murder, it would have destroyed us." – Carol O'Connor Duncanson*

## A Decade of California People of Faith

CPF reached a milestone this year. We've now spent ten years as the largest faith-based anti-death penalty organization in California.

On February 9, 1999, CPF held the first large inter-faith meditation during a vigil at Jaturun Siripongs' execution at San Quentin State Prison. Since then, CPF has held a vigil during each California execution and brought our message of restorative justice and compassion to thousands of members of California's faith communities through speakers, film showings, protests, and public education campaigns.

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to the day when vigils at executions are a thing of the past.

Please keep CPF strong through outreach and monetary donations.

### **Southern California:**

Emily Hammargren  
(213) 235-8305  
[cpf@la-archdiocese.org](mailto:cpf@la-archdiocese.org)

### **Northern California:**

Terry McCaffrey  
(408) 257-1360  
[terrymc@igc.org](mailto:terrymc@igc.org)

## Continue Your Support or JOIN NOW!

- I would like to renew or begin my membership with CPF.  
Attached is my email address and phone number.
- I would like to make a donation to CPF.  
My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is payable to:  
*California People of Faith.*

Please mail your response to CPF's new address:  
2049 S. Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90021

Sincerely,

*Emily Hammargren*

Emily Hammargren  
CPF Coordinator  
[www.californiapeopleoffaith.org](http://www.californiapeopleoffaith.org)

