

# California People of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty

*Educating and Mobilizing Faith Communities to Act to Abolish the Death Penalty in California. Winter 2007*

## The PLACE TO BE for Death Penalty Abolitionists

*Meet hundreds of fellow activists! Choose from dozens of interesting and helpful workshops!*

The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty's (NCADP) Annual Conference is right in our backyard this year and California People of Faith is honored to be a part of this exceptional event. The Conference brings abolitionists from across the country together to build on current efforts to abolish the death penalty and connect participants with new ideas, new arguments, new strategies and new constituencies. The NCADP Annual Conference will be held at the **San Jose Holiday Inn** from **January 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008**.

### Conference Highlights:

- On Friday from 4:30pm to 5:30pm, CPF will lead a caucus titled "Religious Perspectives on California Organizing." This is a gathering for all CPF members and friends throughout California.
- On Friday at 5:30pm, immediately following the CPF Caucus, there will be a beautiful reception sponsored by NCADP and the National Association for Criminal Defense Lawyers to which all our members are invited.
- On Saturday from 7:30pm to 10:00pm, a Fund Raising Dinner & Awards Banquet will honor individuals and organizations who have contributed significantly to abolishing the death penalty. This will be a time for everyone present to celebrate our accomplishments over the past year.

Airfare on carriers such as Southwest offer a "promotional rate" for only about \$138 round trip from Southern California to San Jose. Single and double hotel rooms are available for \$99 until December 21<sup>st</sup> through NCADP. If you feel that you are unable to cover the cost of your attendance, the NCADP offers scholarship opportunities to those who qualify. For more information on scholarships and hotel rooms, please get in touch with Sean Wallace at the NCADP at [sean@ncadp.org](mailto:sean@ncadp.org).

We'd really like to see you in San Jose! For a list of all workshops and other details about the Conference, please visit: [www.ncadp.org](http://www.ncadp.org).

## CPF Member speaks to CCFAJ

Rev. Howard Dotson, a member of CPF's Steering Committee, traveled to Santa Clara on October 17, 2007 to speak to the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice (CCFAJ). The Commission was created by the California State Senate to examine the causes of wrongful convictions and to make recommendations and proposals to further insure that the administration of criminal justice in California is just, fair, and accurate. Rev. Dotson brought the following message to the Commission:

"Today, the United States has more people in prison than we have farmers in the fields. The Prison- Industrial-Complex is an Iron Triangle which is similar to the Military-Industrial-Complex that President Eisenhower warned us about in his final Presidential address.

When I served as a volunteer chaplain at San Quentin, I saw the marketing campaign that went into the creation of our 33rd CA state prison. This new development promised to bring economic revitalization to this rural Central California town. The business of corrections has a profit-generating agenda that conflicts with our pursuit of a fair and just criminal justice system.

Perhaps we need comprehensive campaign finance reform in CA to confront the excessive "tough on crime" political posturing that prevents us from achieving a greater realization of justice and equality for all."

For information on CCFAJ go to [www.ccfaj.org](http://www.ccfaj.org).

## Death Penalty Expert Challenges Clergy

On October 2, 2007, a Dialogue on the Death Penalty was held for clergy members in Ventura County. This event marked the last of four statewide clergy-only events hosted by California People of Faith and Death Penalty Focus that brought inspiration to hundreds of clergy to act against the death penalty. During the event, keynote speaker Aundre Herron, an attorney for the California Appellate Project, offered a strong, inspiring speech that demonstrated the need for clergy to step up to the plate when it comes to the death penalty. The following quotes are excerpts from her speech.

"Religious organizations and faith groups have long expressed their opposition to the death penalty, recognizing the apparent contradiction between religious faith and state-sponsored execution, but while the institutional leadership has issued resolutions, edicts and official pronouncements against the death



Photo by R.W. Dellinger *The Tidings*

penalty, the real message and purpose of these efforts has not been effectively transmitted to or embraced and internalized by organized religions' lay membership."

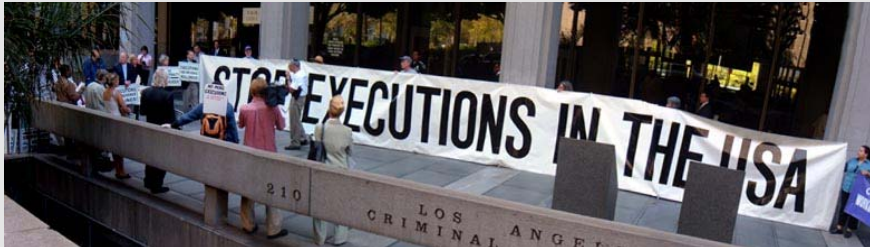
"Doesn't the death penalty violate our values of forgiveness and redemption, compassion and rehabilitation? Have we become so vengeful, so bitter and so attenuated from the inherent value of every human life that we are willing to concede that the ritualistic extermination of our errant fellow citizens is our highest, best and most God-like response?"

"If we consider these questions from a faith-based perspective, the right answer, uncomfortably and unpopular as it may be, cannot be denied. People of faith cannot be party to the death penalty."

## Walk to Stop Executions

Since the *Walk to Stop Executions* began in San Diego in September, hundreds of death penalty abolitionists have rallied, protested, and, of course, walked in opposition to the death penalty. The final rally takes place on Friday, November 30<sup>th</sup> in Sacramento but be sure to take a look at the blog for reports from the entire walk and for rallies still to come. The daily blog can be found at [www.walktostopexecutions.blogspot.com](http://www.walktostopexecutions.blogspot.com).

Below photo: L.A. Rally



## “Dead Man Walking” Performed by... Your School!

Tim Robbins’ and Sister Helen Prejean’s *Dead Man Walking School Theatre Project* is an opportunity to broaden discussion about the death penalty and involve schools and their local communities in an interdisciplinary dialogue about this major social issue.

To find out how your school can put on a performance of Tim Robbins’ *Dead Man Walking* see: [www.dmwplay.org](http://www.dmwplay.org).

### Upcoming “Dead Man Walking” Theatre Performances:

Nov. 28 – 30, 2007 - Carson High School, Carson

Nov. 29, 30 & Dec. 1, 2007 - Drew School, San Francisco

Nov. 29 - Dec. 3, 2007 - Tamalpais High School, Mill Valley

Feb. 8-10, 15-17, 22-24, 2008 - Cabrillo College & Delta Charter H.S., Aptos

## Why do I walk?

I walk for Anthony Porter,  
found innocent and set free  
from death row  
after 21 years of agony.  
And for others like him.

I walk for Bill Pelke,  
who lost his grandma to murder,  
and who now devotes his life  
to fighting the death penalty.  
And for others like him.

I walk for the guilty on death row,  
the pawns of macho politics.  
I walk for the innocent on death row;  
may they someday follow Anthony.  
I walk for the innocent killed on death row;  
may there be no more like them.

I walk for all the abolitionists;  
you are the conscience of the community;  
may you fight on ‘til justice is won.

I walk to Sacramento for our leaders there.  
May their better angels emerge  
so that politics give way to justice.  
And for our leaders across America,  
so that the iron doors of all death chambers  
shall be locked and sealed tight, forever.

*By Jeff Ghelardi - Jeff Ghelardi and Richard Carlburg are walking from San Diego to Sacramento in the Walk to Stop Executions.*

## CPF San Diego Chapter Focuses on their District Attorney

CPF’s San Diego Chapter is busy, as always, with numerous exciting projects. Perhaps the most highly anticipated of these joins San Diego’s District Attorney, Bonnie Dumanis, with eight faith leaders from the community. These religious leaders will meet with Dumanis to imprint upon her that their faith communities do not want the death penalty in their county or state.

The meeting will take place in late November or early December.

## CPF Wants to Meet YOUR Faith Leaders!

California People of Faith would love to meet your faith and social justice leaders.

We’d be happy to bring to your meetings and congregations an informative presentation tailored to fit your timeframe and faith traditions. We draw from numerous death penalty experts, like Steve Rohde, a constitutional lawyer, lecturer, writer, and Vice President of the Progressive Jewish Alliance. Please contact us if you would like to schedule a CPF Presentation.

By working together to educate and mobilize our faith communities, we can end the death penalty!

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## Dear Activists and Friends,

Many members and friends of CPF responded very positively to our last newsletter. We are always happy to hear from you, particularly when you send along a contribution to support our work against the death penalty. \$1700 came in during the last couple of months.

Now is the time for your end-of-the-year holiday contributions. Please renew your relationship to CPF with a generous donation to California People of Faith. Consider a gift of a hundred dollars; it will go a long way to keep alive our faith-based educational campaign against executions. Every gift is appreciated greatly.

You should know that statewide CPF is now officially incorporated as a non-profit organization with the EIN number: 59-3839-238. Your contributions are tax deductible if that is important to you.

Your energy, dedication, and financial support make our program possible. Please indicate below how you can help at this time. Thank you!

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, 3424 Wilshire Blvd.,  
Los Angeles, CA 90010

Sincerely,  
*Emily*

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

