

NCADP Adds Directors of Affiliate Support, Communications, Development

An organization's success depends on its ability to serve its members, communicate its message and attract the financial support that makes these activities possible. Since March, the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty has added four individuals with impressive backgrounds in their specialties.

Many of you know Abe Bonowitz and his extensive experience with social justice issues and organizations, particularly in the movement to end the death penalty. Abe joins us as Director of Affiliate Support, a post he is particularly well qualified for as a result of playing a vital role with New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and its internationally recognized victory in New Jersey. He was co-founder and director of Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, a director of Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and worked as assistant to the director of the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation.

Other prominent roles include Abe's service on the board of Amnesty International USA and as a director of Journey of Hope...From Violence to Healing. He received the Abolitionist of the Year Award in 2004 from NCADP and also served on the organization's board from 2004 to 2008. He graduated from the Ohio Institute of Photography.



From left: Chris Rutledge, Alicia Simmons, Abe Bonowitz

Filling another new position at NCADP is Chris Rutledge, Director of Development, whose responsibilities are concentrated on bringing NCADP's message to foundations, institutions and individuals who understand that our programs and advocacy depend on sufficient financial resources. Before joining NCADP he was in development positions with the Center for Policy Alternatives, Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington and the Columbia University School of Nursing. A graduate of Georgetown University, Chris received a master's degree from the City College of New York.

Margaret Summers joins NCADP as its new Communications Director. She has wide experience in government service, most recently serving in communications posts with the District of Columbia Courts. Margaret also was with the National Immigration Forum and worked with the League of Women Voters and served as press secretary for Congressman Major Owens (D-NY). In addition, she has an extensive background in the broadcast media. A graduate of Ohio State University, she received her master's degree in broadcast journalism from Boston University.



Margaret Summers

In April, Alicia Simmons joined us as Office Manager with its rich mix of responsibilities. A graduate of Eastern Michigan University, she was director of the Congressional Outreach Office of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding and a field organizer for the John Kerry for President campaign.

Finally, NCADP bids farewell to Joshua Noble. For the past two years Josh has been working with us on a part- and full-time basis as he completed graduate studies in social work at Bryn Mawr College. Previously, he worked with Diann Rust-Tierney at the ACLU's Capital Punishment Project as its Project Administrator. We wish him the best in his new position as a counselor at Warwick Family Services in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

NCADP LIFELINES

NCADP *Lifelines* is published quarterly by the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the nation's oldest organization devoted exclusively to abolishing capital punishment. Founded in 1976, NCADP unifies a network of more than 100 affiliate organizations, dedicated advocates and volunteers, and prominent national human and civil rights organizations in the fight to end the death penalty in the United States.

Subscription Information: NCADP *Lifelines* is distributed without charge to NCADP members and affiliate organizations. To find out more about the organization, visit our website at www.ncadp.org

Editor: Paul O'Shea
Photography: Abe Bonowitz
Design: Laurie Rosenthal Seiler

National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty
1705 DeSales Street, NW, Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20036
202-331-4090
Fax: 202-331-4099

© 2008 NCADP. All rights reserved. Affiliates may reprint editorial material without charge provided credit is given to the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.



Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Rich Curtner, Chair, Alaska
Jane Bohman, Vice Chair, Illinois
Renny Cushing, Vice Chair,
New Hampshire
Wendy Trafton, Treasurer,
Massachusetts
Claudia Whitman, Secretary,
Colorado

Jennifer Bishop-Jenkins, Illinois
Curt Crum, Texas
Rick Johnson, Virginia
Juan Roberto Melendez-Colon,
New Mexico
Paul O'Shea, Virginia
Jack Payden-Travers,
North Carolina
Bill Pelke, Alaska
H. Alexander Robinson, Maryland
Bud Welch, Oklahoma

Staff

Executive Director

Diann Rust-Tierney

Director of Affiliate Support

Abraham J. Bonowitz

Director of Development

Chris Rutledge

Director of Communications

Margaret Summers

Office Manager

Alicia Simmons

Intern

Jordan Ford

A Message from Diann Rust-Tierney

The road to abolition is certainly paved with good intentions, but the underlying base is built on strategic planning, timely and well-designed programs, capable staff and the financial resources to achieve success along the way. And so, welcome to the new NCADP *Lifelines*, our quarterly newsletter that tells you about what we are doing to get to our goal, the people behind the titles and other news about the anti-death penalty movement.



Though NCADP *Lifelines* has a new look, we continue to provide information about developments in the movement, and remain committed to our mission—stop the killing, encourage citizens to get educated and involved, see to it that victim family members receive better services.

As you see by our cover story, NCADP is growing. We've added talented staff to work more closely with our affiliates around the country, helping them plot a course that will lead to repeal.

The skills we are building with volunteer operations are life skills—the ingredients that form and motivate good citizens.

Good citizens are aware. NCADP provides timely and reliable information about capital punishment and helps identify and create opportunities for public education.

Good citizens get involved. NCADP helps local affiliates find and train volunteers who want to speak to their local organizations and congregations, write letters to local newspapers and meet their elected officials.

Good citizens build bridges. We encourage our affiliates to build broad-based coalitions against the death penalty locally and leverage this effort by building partnerships with national organizations that share our goal.

Yes, NCADP has a new look and energy, but we remain fixed on the light at the end of the tunnel. Though the tunnel may be a little longer than we'd like to travel, it does have an end.

Join us on the journey.

Executive Director

NCADP Meets NAACP Conference Attendees

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's 99th annual conference, held in July in Cincinnati, included a booth sponsored by NCADP and staffed by Ohioans to Stop Executions. Hundreds of convention delegates joined NCADP, including members of the law enforcement community and many who lost loved ones to murder. Their information will be shared with the appropriate state affiliates. Incoming NAACP President and CEO Benjamin T. Jealous is a long time NCADP veteran, having served on its staff in the 1990s and more recently on its board of directors. He met with Abe at the conference and indicated strong interest in working jointly on the issue.



From left: Abe Bonowitz, NCADP Director of Affiliate Support, Ohioans to Stop Executions members Sue Prieshof, Sister Alice Gerdeman (chair of OTSE) and Bo Chamberlin

NCADP Capitol Hill Briefing

NCADP co-sponsored a special viewing of “At the Death House Door” for Congressional staff members and local activists with the United Methodist Church’s General Board of Church and Society, Amnesty International and Open Society Policy Center. “At the Death House Door” is an independent film project of award winning filmmakers Steve James and Peter Gilbert.

The film presents a striking look at the death penalty in Texas from the perspective of Reverend Carroll Pickett, who served for 15 years as in-house chaplain for Texas death row prisoners.

The evening began with a welcome from Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) and ended with a panel discussion by Rev. Pickett, his wife, Jane, and Peter Gilbert. The evening’s goal was not only to enlighten those attending the event, but to also encourage them to arrange similar viewings in homes, communities and places of worship.

The Capitol Hill briefing coincided with the celebration of Juneteenth, a holiday that marks the date when the slaves in Texas learned of their emancipation, two years after they had been legally freed. The theme of Executive Director Diann Rust-Tierney’s remarks as she introduced the film was the connection between knowledge and freedom. At the end of the program she challenged the group to turn its newfound knowledge about the death penalty from the inside into action for freedom—to encourage others to see the film and spread the word.

Reverend Pickett and his wife have an extensive travel schedule, attending viewings around the country. For more information about the film and how to use it, or to find out about the Reverend’s speaking schedule, contact NCADP.

Affiliate Leaders Hone Skills at NCADP Leadership Institute

This summer, movement leaders from 20 states will converge on Washington, D.C. for NCADP’s first annual Abolitionist Leadership Training Institute. Designed for affiliate staff and volunteer leaders, the training program will cover fundamental elements of effective campaigning including how to build, maintain and mobilize membership, how to obtain publicity through strategic communications activities and what steps to take to create a sound financial base. All of the training is designed to help individual organizations affect public policy through the legislative process.

In order to ensure that even those affiliates in the early stages of development can participate, NCADP is covering costs of atten-

dees. The Institute faculty includes experts in their respective fields both from within and outside the abolition movement.

“We’ve created the Leadership Institute to enable our affiliate leaders to come as teams and learn how to build stronger, more effective units at the state and local level,” said NCADP Affiliate Support Director Abe Bonowitz. “The Institute builds on NCADP’s existing training program which includes our annual conference, monthly affiliate conference calls, *Lifelines State* and one-to-one assistance.”

The Leadership Institute will be held in August at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Q&A With David Elliot

Almost fifteen years ago a young reporter for the Austin American-Statesman covered the execution of Anthony Cook at the Huntsville, Texas prison. It changed the journalist's life because David Elliot's witness to the execution eventually led to a post as NCADP's Communications Director and a distinguished career in the anti-death penalty movement. David's reporting also changed the lives of others because it led to legislative changes in Texas that ensured that death row inmates had access to lawyers to fight for post-conviction appeals. Now, David has moved on from NCADP to a new position as Communications Director of USAction, which advocates for universal health care and extrication of U.S. forces from Iraq, among other national policy issues. *Lifelines* took this opportunity to ask him about the state of the movement today and what we must do to get to abolition. We wish him well in his new post, and are grateful for his thoughts and commitment.



Q: What's the biggest challenge ahead for the anti-death penalty movement?

A: The primary challenge is bringing new allies to our work when we face limited resources. We need to be organizing within labor, feminist groups, religious communities and online communities. There aren't enough of us in the movement right now to abolish the death penalty. We have to expand in concentric circles until we awake one day and realize with wonder: we are the *majority*.

Q: Has media coverage of the issue changed in the years you were with NCADP?

A: When I first joined NCADP in September 2001, the media only recently had been focusing on the number of innocent people wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death. Now this phenomenon is common knowledge in practically every newsroom. A recent trend—and one we will see continue in coming years—is for the media to go back and look at executions that already have occurred and to examine the probability, some might say certainty, that innocent people have been executed.

Q: What advice do you have for state-based affiliates in connection with the struggle for abolition?

A: The strongest advice I can give state affiliates is to realize you are part of a whole. Abolition work can be lonely work and sometimes it feels like you are trying to move a mountain by yourself. What you may not see is that there are other people on other sides of that mountain, and they're trying to move it, too. Together we can move it. The other piece of advice I would offer is that state affiliates never forget their value to the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty—and NCADP's value to state affiliates through its Baseline Assistance Program.

Q: Why are good media relations critical for an affiliate?

A: If an affiliate is not proactively engaging in media advocacy, odds are there is a message vacuum in that state. Our affiliates are the front-line messengers in the fight to abolish the death penalty. If our messengers are absent, it is quite likely that the story of the broken death penalty system—the whole story—is not being told.

Q: What's the biggest advance the movement has made in your seven years?

A: We've made impressive advances in two areas. First, we've been able to incorporate into our message of fairness and innocence an understanding that not only is there a high cost to society from the abuses of the death penalty, but the victims of the crime and of the criminal justice system also pay an unconscionable price. This was not only the moral thing to do, it was also strategically pragmatic. It's a whole lot easier for a person who is undecided on this issue to sympathize with the victim rather than the offender. And, if an undecided person hears a murder victim family member speaking out against the death penalty, it's a whole new ball game.

Second, we've improved the way we talk about the death penalty. We talk not just about the immorality of the death penalty but also about what I call the three 'B's—the Blunders, Biases and Bureaucracies. Blunders, because we send innocent people to death row. Biases, because our death penalty system, like our criminal justice system, treats people differently according to their

class and race. Bureaucracies, because the death penalty system involves years and years of bureaucratic appeals. By the time an execution date rolls around eight, ten or fifteen years after the crime, it is sometimes difficult for Americans to remember why we're having an execution in the first place.

Q: What advice do you have for an activist who lives far away from a major media center?

A: It doesn't matter any more whether you live inside, outside or far away from a major media center! We have this thing called the Internet. The most effective organizing is going on online these days. You have to get on listservs. You have to get on NCADP's listserv and then on your state listserv. And then, you have to organize locally—find people in your community who feel like you do. Sign them up for your state listserv. Get together with them for coffee or a drink or brunch or dinner. Organize, organize, organize! Once you organize, you can begin to think about how to contact your local state House member and state senator. That's the only way we're going to win this thing—one person at a time, one community at a time, one state at a time.

NCADP Donor List

<p><i>Gifts from January 1, 2007 through May 31, 2008</i></p>	<p>Death Penalty Focus H. Stewart Dunn Jr. Stephen A. & Diana L. Goldberg Foundation William Houston Jr. and Hazel Tulecke Wendy Kaminer and Woody Kaplan Jamie Marshall and Tara Gallagher National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers New York State Defenders Association Roger and Dotty Nittler Presbyterian Church USA Squire, Sanders & Dempsey LLP Ronald Tabak</p>	<p>New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty June Picciano H. Alexander Robinson John Scott Lindsay Shea / Woodcock #3 Foundation Sisters of the Precious Blood Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Sisters of Providence Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Byron and Lee Stookey</p>	<p>Madan Kumar Rev. Kathy Lancaster and Rev. Lewis Lancaster, Jr. Frederick Lowrey Jr. Carol Nicholson Gianluigi Nusca Clayton Parsons Sharolyn Paschal Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Margaret Phillips and Herman Blumenthal R.E.M./Athens, Ltd. Douglas Robinson Arlene Rodenbeck & Rick Morgan Stephen Rohde Oren and Barbara Root David Ruhnke and Jean Barrett Rosemary Ryan The Susan Sarandon Charitable Foundation Riki and Michael Sheehan Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty Wendy Trafton United Church of Christ Eugene and Marilyn Wanger Bud and Lois Welch Rodney Wilkerson</p>
<p>\$500,000+ The Atlantic Philanthropies</p>			
<p>\$50,000+ The Estate of Mark Eisner Jr. Public Welfare Foundation</p>			
<p>\$10,000–\$49,999 Maverick Lloyd Foundation Morrison & Foerster Paul O'Shea Edna C. Wardlaw Charitable Trust Williams & Connolly, LLP</p>			
<p>\$5,000–\$9,999 ACLU-CPP Elias Foundation David and Anne Kendall David and Carol Myers UMC Board of Global Ministries Elizabeth Zitrin</p>	<p>\$1,000–\$1,999 Adorers of the Blood of Christ Dean Attaway Frank Baumgartner Church of the Epiphany Ten Percent Committee Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Ivan and Patricia Held Horizons Foundation David Kaplan Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation</p>	<p>\$500–\$999 Judith Ancel David Baldus Albert and Mary Jane Bilik Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Richard Curtner Equal Justice USA/ Quixote Center Kit Gage and Steve Metalitz Anne Hall Gerald Haynes Stephen Hill Barbara Hood and Dirk Sisson Veronica Jarrett Stephanie Johns Andrea Johnson Merle and Phyllis Krause</p>	
<p>\$2,000–\$4,999 Bernard and Anne Attal Hugo Adam Bedau and Constance Putnam Carnegie Corporation of New York Matching Gifts Program David Cohen / The Cohen–Goodman Family Fund</p>			

YES! I want to help NCADP and join its allies above in fighting the Death Penalty!

(A reply envelope is enclosed in Lifelines as a courtesy to our supporters)

- \$25
 \$50
 \$100
 \$250
 \$500
 \$1,000

Name _____ Title _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

CREDIT CARD: Visa MasterCard American Express Discover

Credit Card # _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Death Penalty Books

The Death Penalty Today

Robert M. Bohm, professor at the University of Central Florida's Department of Criminal Justice and Legal Studies has compiled articles and essays from leading death penalty experts in *The Death Penalty Today* (CRC Press, 2008, \$69.95). The book presents an in-depth examination of current issues surrounding the debate, from miscarriages of justice, including errors in conviction and possible remedies, to death penalty opinion with surveys of experts and mid-level police managers. Among the authors featured is Hugo Adam Bedau. With lucid arguments supported by verifiable statistics and expert opinion, *The Death Penalty Today* provides a sober look at capital punishment in the United States and begs the question of when, not if, this country will join the majority of the civilized world in its abolition.

The Road To Abolition: How New Jersey Abolished the Death Penalty

New Jersey Senator Raymond J. Lesniak traveled the road from apostate to true believer. In 1982, as a member of the New Jersey state legislature, he voted to reinstate the death penalty in the Garden State. Twenty-five years later he co-sponsored the legislation and was a leader in the campaign to end capital punishment, as New Jersey became the first state in 40 years to vote for abolition. This fascinating story is told in Senator Lesniak's new book, *The Road to Abolition: How New Jersey Abolished the Death Penalty* (The Road to Peace and Justice, 2008, \$25), a book of speeches, letters and testimony recounting the historic event. As The New York Times said recently in an editorial praising his transformation, "Mr. Lesniak's constituents were not nearly as angry with him as he had feared. He concluded that elected officials are much freer than they believe to vote their conscience."

Capital Quotes

"I spend 20 hours a week working as a volunteer to end the death penalty. I write letters to the editor and op-ed articles, and I am the chairwoman of the San Francisco chapter of Death Penalty Focus, a grass-roots anti-death penalty organization.

Here is what I am learning:

Most people never give any thought to the death penalty. Once you get them to think about it, they are more often against it.

If people want to help end state killing, they should start talking to everyone about it."

NANCY OLIVEIRA
SAN FRANCISCO
THE NEW YORK TIMES' LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
MAY 7, 2008

"I have relied on my own experience in reaching the conclusion that the imposition of the death penalty represents 'the pointless and needless extinction of life with only marginal contributions to any discernible social or public purposes. A penalty with such negligible returns to the State (is) patently excessive and cruel and unusual punishment violative of the Eighth Amendment.'"

JUSTICE JOHN PAUL STEVENS
BAZE V. REES
APRIL 17, 2008

"I don't think there's any words in the English language to explain what it's—what it's like to—to sit on Texas death row and your thoughts are laying on that gurney, convicted but innocent and being put to death."

KERRY MAX COOK, twice convicted and sentenced to death for the 1977 rape murder of a 21-year old secretary in Texas. Cook was released after 22 years when DNA tests confirmed that semen found on the victim's clothes was not his.

The Supreme Court's Split Decisions

Two Supreme Court decisions in major death penalty cases underscored the relevance of the issue to the national agenda. In addition to issuing its own media statements and responses, NCADP worked hard to help affiliates understand the decisions and make the most of the media interest by providing strategy conference calls, talking points and other assistance.

The first, in *Baze v. Rees* upheld the constitutionality of the lethal injection protocol at issue in the case. Despite evidence that the three-drug cocktail could cause excruciating pain and that there were inadequate safeguards to prevent needless suffering, the Court ruled 7-2 that the Kentucky regimen does not violate the Eighth Amendment prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment.

When the decision was announced, NCADP Executive Director Diann Rust-Tierney said, "Now that the Court has ruled, the death penalty remains as deeply a flawed public policy as ever. The relatively narrow scope of the Court's deliberations did not address basic issues of fairness, bias, ineffective assistance of counsel or innocent people being convicted and sentenced to death."

The impact of the Baze decision was that after a seven-month moratorium, executions would resume at a somewhat accelerated pace. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, about 15 death row prisoners are scheduled to be put to death before October. By the end of the year DPIC estimates that as many as 50 or 60 more executions will take place.

NCADP PROVIDED STRATEGY CONFERENCE CALLS, TALKING POINTS AND OTHER ASSISTANCE TO AFFILIATES.

There was a more encouraging decision in a second case, *Kennedy v. Louisiana*.

The Court ruled 5 to 4 that it is unconstitutional to impose the death penalty for crimes that do not involve murder. Writing for the majority, Justice Kennedy's opinion, which acknowledges the degree to which the death penalty as a means of retribution can run roughshod over our other values was particularly encouraging.

Kennedy wrote: Evolving standards of decency must embrace and express respect for the dignity of the person, and the punishment of criminals must conform to that rule (cite omitted). As we shall discuss, punishment is justified under one or more of three principal rationales: rehabilitation, deterrence, and retribution. (cite omitted) It is the last of these, retribution, that most often can contradict the law's own ends. This is of particular concern when the Court interprets the meaning of the Eighth Amendment in capital cases. When the law punishes by death, it risks its own sudden descent into brutality, transgressing the constitutional commitment to decency and restraint. For these reasons we have explained that capital punishment must "be limited to those offenders who commit 'a narrow category of the most serious crimes' and whose extreme culpability make them 'the most deserving of execution.'"

In reviewing *Kennedy*, Rust-Tierney said: "It was encouraging that the Court confirmed its original judgment in 1976 that the death penalty should be limited to crimes involving murder, in part because of the increased risk that arbitrariness and discrimination would play too great a role. In other words, that we are likely to get it wrong. Given the overwhelming evidence that we are getting it wrong, in many ways today the notion that we could expand the death penalty without addressing concerns that have been expressed in all quarters—prosecutors, victims, defense attorneys, families of people on death row, would be an extraordinarily poor decision."

NCADP and Working Assets Working for a Good Cause

NCADP is proud to have been selected as a 2008 Working Assets/CREDO Mobile donation partner. Each time you use CREDO Mobile, CREDO Long Distance or the Working Assets Credit Card, Working Assets will add to its pool of donations to nonprofit groups working for peace, equality and human rights. This donation adds up to one per cent of the charges for every phone call and ten cents for each time you use your credit card. Since 1985 Working

Assets/CREDO has raised over \$60 million for progressive causes.

You can support NCADP if you are a Working Assets/CREDO long distance, mobile phone or credit card customer or thinking of becoming one by directing Working Assets to increase the share of its support that goes to us this year. Visit <http://www.workingassets.com/Recipients.aspx> for more details.

1705 DeSales Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Washington, D.C.
Permit No. 211

Return service requested

The Passing of the Baton

In this case, it wasn't a relay baton being exchanged but a walking stick, emblematic of a long journey and a changing of leadership for the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. Bill Pelke, hand outstretched at the left, passes the stick to Rich Curtner, new NCADP board chairman. Bill was elected to the board in 1996 and served as chair from 2004 to 2008. He continues to serve as a board member. Rich has been a public defender for more than thirty years and now serves as Federal Defender for Alaska.



SAVE THE DATE
AND PLAN TO ATTEND
THE NEXT
NCADP CONFERENCE

DATE:

January 22–25, 2009

PLACE:

Holiday Inn Harrisburg East
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

NCADP Conference