

Lifelines

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL COALITION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY • NUMBER 101 • FALL 2009

NCADP “Shouting from the Rooftops” Campaign Focuses Attention on Innocent and Executed Texan Cameron Todd Willingham

The last two months have seen tremendous media attention focused on the story of Cameron Todd Willingham, executed in 2004 for a crime scientists say cannot be proven. To highlight Willingham’s story, and to draw attention to the cause of innocents convicted and executed, NCADP has launched its “Shouting from the Rooftops” campaign (see www.ShoutingFromTheRooftops.org).



The “Shouting” campaign’s goal is to make sure everyone knows that the worst imaginable thing has happened – an innocent man has been executed.

The current controversy started when “Trial by Fire,” reported by David Grann, was published in early September in the *New Yorker*. Grann details the case, and reveals that a report, prepared at the state of Texas’ direc-

tion by fire expert Craig Beyler, proves the evidence used to convict Willingham of arson was worthless. Willingham insisted he was innocent up to and including the day he was executed.

NCADP stepped up its campaign after Texas Governor Rick Perry removed four Texas Forensic Science Commission members in the days around a scheduled hearing to accept and review Dr. Beyler’s

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LOUISVILLE KENTUCKY, JANUARY 14-17 2010

Put on Your Hard Hat! NCADP’s Annual Conference to Build Bridges to New Audiences

The “construction workers” arriving at NCADP’s annual conference won’t be wearing overalls, hard hats or steel-toed shoes. They’ll be organizers not steelworkers, activists instead of electricians, abolitionists rather than bricklayers. Nevertheless, from January 14 through 17, 2010, Louisville’s historic Seelbach Hotel will become a huge “building site.”

The project: speed the demolition of a dangerously rotten section of America’s criminal justice system. The blueprint: replace the death penalty by building new bridges between invigorated abolitionists

and a growing set of allies. The work orders: expand the foundation of trust with law enforcement, reconfigure communications links with conservatives, and install stronger supports for families of victims. Our theme: **Training for the Long Run — Building Bridges to Wider Audiences**, builds on the bedrock of our recent successes, our hard work, and our skilled labor.

Once again, NCADP has constructed its annual conference around nuts-and-bolts training for real-world

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Kurt Rosenberg (at podium), Director of Witness to Innocence, with Diann Rust-Tierney and death row exonerees, was recognized during the 2009 NCADP Awards Dinner in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania for coordinating and empowering the voices of death row survivors. True to the 2010 NCADP conference theme, Witness to Innocence is one of many organizations building bridges between the abolition movement and the public.



A Message from Diann Rust-Tierney

Dear Friends:

As we head into a season of celebration and 2009 comes to a close, we are surveying the year from our vantage point at NCADP. And we can see clearly that the tide continues to turn against the death penalty.

Not so long ago, the idea that states would actually repeal their death penalty statutes seemed fanciful. And that this would be done across the country with limited resources seemed incredibly ambitious.

But as I look at this past year, what seemed fanciful and ambitious at one time, is just what we have done.

New Mexico became the second state in three years to repeal the death penalty, joining New Jersey. New York also rejected the death penalty, first by the courts, and then by a legislative decision not to reinstate. Ten other legislatures considered repeal measures, and some came within just one or two votes of becoming law.

We have had some key public developments on this issue that have helped to drive the momentum in our favor. New exonerations now bring the total number of innocents saved from execution, after being sent to death row, to 139. The renewed focus of attention on the Cameron Todd Willingham case because of a major article in the *New Yorker*, and the Governor of Texas' moves to avoid accountability, has highlighted the problem of innocents being executed.

When opportunities arise to educate the public and grow our campaigns, we are capitalizing on them. For example, as the public became more and more concerned about the Willingham case, NCADP rose to the challenge by creating "Shouting from the Rooftops," which helps activists share information, ask for policy changes, and make a difference. We are increasing the visibility of our issue, ensuring that policy-makers know how to react, and growing the size and strength of our activist and Affiliate base.

Over this past year, NCADP sought to make it possible for more of our grassroots Affiliates to succeed – we refined and expanded our offerings at our Abolitionist Leadership Training Institute (ALTI) and increased our collaboration with partner organizations

such as Equal Justice USA. We are ensuring that NCADP Affiliate leadership and volunteers get the most access to consistent high-quality support for their work, from us, and our many partners. And we have worked to create mechanisms and opportunities to provide more forums for state grassroots organizations to develop and share strategies.

Across the country, NCADP's Affiliates' leadership and volunteers have set their sights on systematically reaching out to their communities and bringing more people into the movement. Our members are speaking persuasively about what is needed to hold offenders accountable and keep us safe—and how abolitionists can be part of the solution.

None of this would be possible without the love and support of our families. They support us through the toughest times — this is a life and death struggle. No matter how far removed from the execution chamber we may be — at our desks, conducting trainings or providing strategic advice in every corner of the country — we are reminded that we fight a barbaric practice.

We are also reminded daily as we interact with our colleagues who have lost loved ones to murder, that their pain is real, and never should be forgotten or ignored. What we need are policies that help prevent those tragedies from befalling others, and a system of accountability and integrity that brings justice.

So we look forward to next year, knowing that we will be refreshed by our successes, invigorated by the challenges ahead and ready to win abolition for you and the good of our country.

Peace

Diann

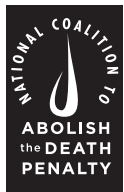
NCADP Lifelines is published quarterly by the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the nation's oldest organization devoted exclusively to abolishing capital punishment. Founded in 1976, NCADP unifies a network of more than 100 Affiliate organizations, dedicated advocates and volunteers,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

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

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“Smarter” and “Tougher” on Crime: New York City’s Crime and Policing Innovations and their Implications for Abolition

BY PAUL RUFFINS

In 1989 David Dinkins said, “I intend to be the toughest mayor on crime this city has ever seen,” and began a 20-year program of innovation in crime prevention and police practices for New York City. Now, New York City is the safest big city in the US, with amazing success in protecting citizens. Continued and expanded by Mayors Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg, this experiment has resulted in murders in New York City dropping from 2,245 as Mayor Dinkins assumed office, to 2009 projections of less than 500.

Despite a population of more than eight million, the city’s rates of rape and murder are less than half that of other major cities such as Dallas. Why is this important for abolitionists? Because New York does not have the death penalty.

The drop in violent crime in New York City has many fascinating policy implications. New York City is a racially and economically diverse city where few citizens own firearms for self-defense. The state implemented and then abandoned the death penalty without executing a single prisoner, so for those who argue that capital punishment is a necessary deterrent for homicides, New York City’s policing and crime prevention innovations strongly suggest otherwise.

“Crime in the city continued to decline after the New York State Court of Appeals struck down the death penalty,” says David Kaczynski, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (NYADP), an organization that works to unite victims, law enforcement, advocates for the mentally ill, restorative justice practitioners and families of the incarcerated around policies that address their real and immediate needs and reduce the likelihood of violent crime.

Before the late 1990’s, many criminologists believed crime rates had little relationship to policing because, among other reasons, cities with many officers-per-citizen were no safer than those with smaller ratios. Occasionally police chiefs were fired after brutality or corruption cases, but typically departments were evaluated by percentages of cleared cases, or response times to 911 calls, rarely by changes in crime.

Recently, researchers and politicians have examined the New York Police Department’s (NYPD) effective but controversial “Broken Windows” tactics of stopping and questioning large numbers of people for low-level “quality of life” offenses such as property damage, drinking alcoholic beverages in public, shattering car or building windows or defacing public property with graffiti.

“Restorative justice” has also increased in New York City, in which offenders

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New York City *From Page 3*

arrested for “quality of life” crimes such as public drinking or vandalism are given sentences that emphasize mediated settlements between offenders, victims and the neighborhoods where the crimes took place, and providing offenders with assistance they need to avoid criminal activity, such as mental health services and substance abuse treatment. Offenders are often sentenced to supervised community service, such as washing graffiti off walls and sidewalks. The Mid-Town Community Court in Manhattan was one of the first “problem-solving” courts established in 1993 to combine punishment and help in this manner, focusing on offenses committed around Times Square. That experiment evolved to become the New York-based Center for Court Innovation, a think tank which assists courts in jurisdictions nationally in establishing “problem-solving” community courts, drug courts, re-entry courts, domestic violence courts, and mental health courts.

ENHANCING POLICE EFFORTS

When Mayor Dinkins hired Dr. Lee Brown of Houston as Commissioner of the NYPD and Boston’s William Bratton as head of the New York City Transit Police, it shocked the law enforcement community. Corporations had long sought successful executives from outside, but localities inevitably hired veteran insiders who “knew the police department” and shared its values. Mayor Dinkins opened a new world of professional opportunity and freedom for police managers who could produce results. “The most important thing New York proved was that better, more professional police management really can reduce crime,” said Ron Hampton, executive director of the National Black Police Association.

Bratton, who recently left the Los Angeles Police Department, once noted, “...We discovered that our warrant investigators, once they’d read the papers and had their morning coffee, weren’t hitting the streets until 10 or 11 a.m. We started sending them out at 3 a.m. when their targets were more likely to be home. Apprehension of those with outstanding warrants tripled in two years.”

THE POLITICS OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

The NYPD has also made greater use of computer technology that allows management to quickly identify communities’ crime patterns and hold precinct commanders accountable for trends in their neighborhoods. However, this would have been impossible without the political will to redeploy officers from safer, higher-income neighborhoods to where they’re needed most. The NYPD is also experimenting with innovative monitoring technologies to reduce further domestic violence, which can lead to homicides. Using the experimental monitoring technique, victims are notified and a police squad car is dispatched if a violent former partner, friend or relative gets too close.

Although many New Yorkers are feeling more secure due to the downturn in crime, there are those who say that the city still needs to focus more attention on victims’ services.

“Reducing crime is a profound achievement,” says NYADP activist Susan Schindler, “but prevention is not a substitute for providing

comfort and services to the remaining victims. Their pain is not necessarily reduced because others are statistically safer. What fewer victims should mean is that we can reach out to many more.”

The NYPD experiment is one of the very few instances where a politician’s promise to “get tough on crime,” really means “getting smarter on crime” and moving toward greater safety for all New York City communities, whether upper or lower income.

NEXT ISSUE:

- *Lifelines* will consider the “**Boston Miracle**,” which took a very different approach to reducing juvenile homicide.
- **Ron Hampton** will be featured on a panel of experts discussing law enforcement’s perspective on the death penalty at NCADP’s Annual Conference in Louisville, from January 14-17, 2010.

Shouting from the Rooftops *From Page 1*

report. The new Commission chair promptly cancelled the hearing and refused to set a timeline for rescheduling it.

“Through this campaign, we call on the American people to ‘Shout from the Rooftops’ that Cameron Todd Willingham was innocent and executed,” says Diann Rust-Tierney, NCADP Executive Director. “Whatever your position on capital punishment, we can all agree that a system which ignores evidence of innocence and allows an innocent person to be executed is not befitting our nation and our shared value of fairness.”

The campaign takes its name from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who wrote in 2006 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**.”

NCADP previously publicized Willingham’s case in its 2007 report, “Innocent and Executed,” which explored his case and the executions of three other death row inmates whose guilt was questionable: Ruben Cantu and Carlos De Luna, also of Texas, and Larry Griffin of Missouri.

“Willingham’s case demonstrates how mistakes can and have been made, and that it’s time to end capital punishment,” says Rust-Tierney. “It’s too late to save Willingham, but it’s not too late to stop more cases like his from occurring. The truth will be revealed, despite official attempts to hide it.”

NCADP urges people to join the “Shouting from the Rooftops” campaign by reading the *New Yorker* article, sharing it with friends, and spreading the word about the case through videos, letters to the editor and other means. More information about the campaign and how you can participate in it is posted at the NCADP website, and can be reached directly at www.ShoutingFromTheRooftops.org.

NCADP 2010 *From Page 1*

results, speakers on the cutting-edge of repeal, gatherings and networking for the pleasure of your good company and to ensure our movement is unified. We doubt anyone will check into our conference carrying welding goggles, claw hammers or electric drills, but everyone can leave with the tools they need to get the job done.

SPEAKERS TO INSPIRE

Our Keynote speaker will be **Sister Helen Prejean**, author of “Dead Man Walking,” whose pioneering work acknowledged abolitionists’ fundamental need to make common cause with victims’ families. Sister Helen’s journey to dedicate her life to abolition is well-known due to the movie starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn.

Barry W. Lynn, Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State will chair a plenary session on reaching out to conservative and religious communities. **Professor Howard Zehr**, of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University will discuss the healing and growth available through restorative justice. And panels on law enforcement, racial bias, and the state of the death penalty will feature nationally-known speakers. *(The full agenda is posted on the Annual Conference page at NCADP.org.)*

WORKSHOPS TO HELP US WIN

The conference will also offer more than two dozen workshops and training forums to assist organizers and activists with growing their local anti-death penalty campaigns. These workshops will feature new strategies to build strong membership bases for Affiliates, assist with organizational fundraising, help diversify the abolition constituency base, and communicate effectively using both traditional and new media.



Along with learning, the conference will feature for the first time an Activist Activity Center, which will be a space for activists to get expert help in writing op-eds, recording “Shouting from the Rooftops” campaign videos, polishing their website, starting a Rachel’s Fund page, or learning best practices for campaigns.

NETWORKING FOR FRIENDSHIP AND GROWTH

The conference will also feature a number of exciting networking sessions, including special sessions for Affiliate executive directors and board leadership and an orientation for first time attendees.

Activists representing specific constituencies within the movement, such as murder victims’ family members, veterans, and the exonerated will have their own times to network and gather. Anyone interested in ensuring they have time scheduled for their constituency can contact conference organizer Aimee Gabel at aimee@ncadp.org to schedule a get together. And, to keep our attendees healthy and active during the conference, we’ll sponsor early-morning yoga and running groups each day.

We will also take time to celebrate our successes. Following closely on the heels of New Jersey’s victory, New Mexico abolished the death penalty in 2009, and **NCADP’s Annual Awards Dinner** will recognize heroes of our movement. Honorees include:

- Governor Bill Richardson and Representative Gail Chasey of New Mexico as Abolitionists of the Year
- The New Mexico Coalition to Repeal the Death Penalty, Lighting the Torch of Conscience Award
- New York University Professor of Law Anthony Amsterdam, Lifetime Achievement Award
- Singer-Songwriter Steve Earle, Shining Star of Abolition Award.

NCADP’s 2010 Conference will be America’s largest meeting of activists committed to replacing capital punishment with just and effective alternatives. Register online today at NCADP.org and come ready to roll up your sleeves and get down to the work.

Yes We Can!

I want to help NCADP in its fight to end the death penalty! *All contributions are 100% tax deductible.*

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Second Annual Abolitionist Leadership Training Institute Brings More Participants From More Places

The women and men who gathered for NCADP's 2009 Abolitionist Leadership Training Institute (ALTI) were drawn there as part of America's groundswell of activism against the death penalty. These abolitionists came to Catholic University over a long, hot Washington, D.C. weekend in response to the public's growing concern about the death penalty. They were determined to end capital punishment, and left inspired and educated to effect real change.

The Institute was held the first weekend of August, and the 68 activists who attended represented an almost 20% increase over the number who took part in NCADP's inaugural leadership training in 2008. Participants came from 27 different states and the District of Columbia, representing more than one-third more states than the previous year.

During last year's event, which rejoiced over abolition in New Jersey, Viki Elkey of the New Mexico Coalition to Repeal the Death Penalty predicted that her state would also ban capital punishment. By the time ALTI 2009 took place, that dream had blossomed into reality, along with legislative gains in Maryland, and partial victories in Colorado and other battlegrounds.

Abe Bonowitz, NCADP's Director of Affiliate Support, was a constant presence at the training, and played a central role in its success. "I believe that the legislative victories we had in 2007 and 2008 gave this year's participants much greater confidence that our strategies really can help their state repeal or at least restrict the death penalty," he declares.

Aja DeGross of Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, found that ALTI provided both inspiration and information. "There are several people in Pennsylvania that I have been working with by phone and e-mail for a long time. ALTI gave me the chance to finally meet them face-to-face," she says. "The amount of new information could have been overwhelming if it hadn't been tied into practical situations we're facing right now. For example, the session on fundraising really widened my idea of what 'fundraising' could be. It gave me the inspiration and confidence to apply for a grant that might allow me to work for the movement full time rather than just part time."

READY, SET, SMILE!

One of the new offerings this year was a lengthy session of videotaped, on-camera training that helped participants improve their presentation skills. Brenna McDonough, who conducted the sessions, says, "Most ALTI participants were interested in presenting a more credible, more approachable face to the media during interviews, TV programs or webcasts. Some of the common issues people have when they're on TV for the first few times are speaking



ALTI participants in workshops at the Catholic University campus.

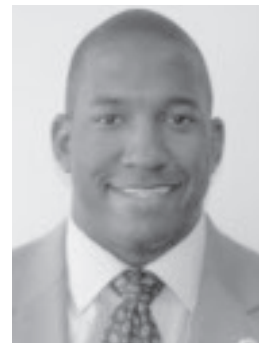


much too fast, or thinking they're smiling when they actually look tense. Immediately seeing yourself during playback is a lot more useful than hearing someone tell you how you sounded a few hours later, particularly if you're a visual learner."

"I thought the videotape training was huge, just a great idea," says Kevin Werner of Ohioans to Stop Executions. "I learned that moving my hands around too much was distracting, and that I could come across as a lot more relaxed and thoughtful by paying attention to my breathing, and by starting out by taking two or three slow deep breaths."

Ron Steiner, who came to ALTI as part of NCADP's Oregon Affiliate, but had also been active in New Mexico, thought it was extremely important to get the chance to speak with, and learn from, activists from other states. He also found it heartening to work with people across generational lines. "Since I'm over 70, I'm one of the old dogs in this movement," he says, "therefore it was great to see that we're growing and being renewed by so many new people in their 20s and 30s."

Questions and Answers with Jeremy Collins



Jeremy Collins, Campaign Coordinator for the North Carolina Coalition for a Moratorium, is a 2002 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with degrees in Political Science and Communication Studies. Since graduating, he has worked in the nonprofit sector providing grassroots and legislative advocacy on social justice issues. Collins was actively involved in the work leading up to the North Carolina Racial Justice Act, which permits a defendant facing a capital trial or an inmate sentenced to death to use evidence showing a pattern of racial disparity as a way of challenging racial injustice in the death penalty. Prosecutors would then have the opportunity to rebut the claim that the statistical disparities indicate racial bias. If proven, a judge could overturn the death sentence or prevent prosecutors from seeking the death penalty.

Q: How did you get involved in abolition?

A: At UNC I needed a few credits, but didn't want to add another class. So, I did an independent study on race and the death penalty in North Carolina. It really opened my mind to the fact that the death penalty was inherently racist and unfair.

Q: How does being a young black man impact your perspective on this issue?

A: I am very aware that I'm part of the demographic group most likely to get the death

penalty. I have given several talks where people simply assumed that I was an exoneree. Another reason I have a different perspective is that I am a convert. I was raised in a religious family in a small town in a very conservative, very rural part of Eastern North Carolina. I developed my position against the death penalty after growing up believing it was reasonable. This helps me reach out to a different audience than some of my colleagues.

Q: What are some recent developments in North Carolina?

A: In August, we passed the North Carolina Racial Justice Act allowing inmates on death row to present a judge with local or statewide statistical evidence of racial bias. For example, an inmate could challenge the fact that a prosecutor used preemptory challenges to remove African-Americans from the jury, because historically, African-American jurors have been less likely to impose a death sentence.

Q: What made the difference this year?

A: We first introduced the legislation in 2006. In 2007, it passed the House but not the Senate. This year, we introduced companion bills in the House and Senate at the same time and a version passed both chambers. There have been several high-profile exonerations in North Carolina, so even some who theoretically support capital punishment have a growing distrust of how it is actually administered.

Q: What are some of the challenges ahead?

A: First, the North Carolina Supreme Court has ruled against the State Medical Society's attempt to prevent doctors from participating in executions, which might clear

the way for executions to begin again. Another is that even many black citizens here are very conservative about crime. There is a "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime," mentality that can justify capital punishment. If a case is not blatantly racist, many folks are far too willing to trust that police and prosecutors will play fair. In my mind, my first organizing success was changing my own father's opinion. He is a minister, and originally believed in "An eye for eye." It took me some time to make him see that his own Savior was the victim of an unjust death penalty.

Q: What advice would you offer to other activists in the movement?

A: Practice what you preach. We often call for forgiveness, mercy and equality, and tell people who have been terribly hurt that someone's human worth is greater than the worst thing they have ever done. We've got to live those principles in our own lives.

Q: It seems that one would have to be like Gandhi or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to truly put that into practice every day.

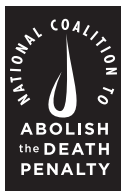
A: Yes. It's very hard, but we still have to try.

Lifelines

Keeping Up Between the Lifelines

NCADP provides several ways to keep up with breaking news and action opportunities. Visit NCADP's web page for links to breaking news, commentary by Executive Director Diann Rust-Tierney and others on our blog and in the Huffington Post, and ways to weigh in with your own involvement.

Sign up with the NCADP cause on Facebook at <http://www.causes.com/ncadp>. Follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ncadp>.



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NCADP, Affiliates, Tabling to Build Bridges to Wider Audiences



This year, NCADP and its Affiliates increased their tabling presence at national organizations' conferences and conventions. The Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP) tabled at the National Black Police Association's national education and training conference in Dallas. The Indiana Information Center on the Abolition of Capital Punishment tabled at the Capitolbeat state governments' reporters conference in Indianapolis. The Puerto Rican Coalition Against the Death Penalty tabled at the League of United Latin American Citizens' (LULAC) convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico. And NCADP tabled at the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Weekend conference at the Washington, D.C. Convention Center. Volunteer table staff included NCADP Board of Directors members Paul O'Shea (left) and Rick Johnson, and NCADP Office Manager Alicia Simmons, pictured greeting U.S. Representative and Congressional Black Caucus member Al Green (D-Texas).