

Lifelines

News from the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty • Number 107 • Summer 2012

Connecticut Becomes 17th State and Fifth In Five Years To Reject Capital Punishment

The national march away from capital punishment in the United States took another step forward in April when Connecticut's Governor Dannel Malloy signed legislation that made the Nutmeg state the fifth in five years to take this life-saving step. Connecticut joined Illinois, New Mexico, New Jersey and New York who have rejected the death penalty since 2007.

The final stretch of the Connecticut effort was led by Ben Jones, executive director of the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty, an NCADP Affiliate.

In addition to numerous members of the Connecticut Network and its affiliates, other important voices in the repeal effort came from law enforcement and the families of murder victims. Over 180 surviving family members of murder victims on both sides of the death penalty

debate called upon the Connecticut legislature to repeal the state's death penalty law. Dozens participated in news conferences, contacted lawmakers, appeared in the media and attended the votes in the General Assembly.

Their impact was key to the vote. Rep. Kim Rose said she decided to support repeal after speaking with a man whose son was murdered. "The moment I looked into his eyes and heard his story and I felt his pain, I got it. For him to finally come to some closure with it, was kind of a turning point for me."

Elizabeth Brancato, a lifelong opponent of capital punishment despite the murder of her mother, told the Associated Press: "It was one of the best moments of my life" when the bill was approved in the legislature.

The Connecticut victory drew national and international attention to the momentum building behind abolition. NCADP Executive Director Diann Rust-Tierney said in *The Washington Times*, "I am pleased to say that the end

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Appreciation For An Activist: Martina Davis-Correia

By Paul Ruffins

Last December, our movement lost one of its leading champions when Martina Davis-Correia, the older sister of Troy Davis, died of breast cancer just a few short months after her brother was executed. She was 44 years old.

Martina's energy and dedication drew supporters ranging from the Pope and Desmond Tutu, to thousands of people around the world. Her efforts earned her widespread recognition including the Georgia Civil Liberties Award from the American Civil Liberties Union, the Frederick Douglas Award from the Southern Center for Human Rights, and the Sean McBride Award for Outstanding Contributions to Human Rights from the Irish Section of Amnesty International.

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A Message from Diann Rust-Tierney

Welcome to the next generation of *Lifelines*! This is our first issue in a new digital format.

In our 35th year *Lifelines*, like the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (which began as the National Coalition Against the Death Penalty), has adapted to meet changing reality while staying true to our mission. Every year our team takes time to plan how to refocus our resources and energies on those activities that will lead to the end of the death penalty most expeditiously.

National Leadership and Alliances

The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty works to facilitate strategic discussions within the wider movement. We continue to partner with and build alliances with diverse members of the religious community. I recently participated in a capital punishment forum for Black Clergy that was organized by our colleagues at the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Racial Justice (see page 4).

Our partnerships with the broader civil rights community have grown through the struggle to save Troy Anthony Davis and the tragic events surrounding Trayvon Martin. We help the abolition and civil rights communities to connect the unfairness inherent in capital punishment with wider disparities experienced by people of color and poor people who are locked out of conversations about building safe and healthy communities.

We look forward to continuing our partnerships with the NAACP and NAACP Legal Defense Fund and enhancing our connections to other national organizations committed to social justice like the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

Our Rachel’s Fund program encourages activists in the abolition movement to build common ground with advocates for victims of homicide and to support enhanced services for all survivors of homicide.

As part of the Rachel’s Fund work, our staff participated in a recent training conducted by Will Marling, Executive Director of NOVA, the National Organization for Victim Assistance. He and board member Renny Cushing, Executive Director of Murder Victims’ Families for Human Rights, provided a victim centered perspective that will help our staff and supported NCADP Affiliates as they seek to work compassionately with survivors of homicide.

The Rachel’s Fund Program also reminds us that we must continue to show compassion and support for the family member of people on death row. You can expect to hear more from us in this area as well.

State-Based Efforts

We provide intensive support to states with active repeal campaigns and states with high death sentencing rates. We work with Affiliate directors to determine priorities, facilitate strategic planning and provide direct assistance with fundraising, communications and organizing.

The network of anti-death penalty organizations across the country is the heart and soul of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. It is the engine that drives us in the struggle to end capital punishment.

Our role is to empower abolitionists — ensuring that they have the organizational capacity, resources and support needed to mount campaigns to end capital punishment in their states. We are offering new opportunities that take advantage of peer mentoring. These will be integrated with our successful Abolitionist Leadership Training Institute and will leverage the considerable talent in our field and build a stronger and more cohesive movement.

The Annual NCADP Conference on Hiatus

After much internal discussion among staff and Board, we have decided to postpone the annual conference that would have been held in August of this year. The conference has always been a welcome opportunity to learn, network, gain support from colleagues and celebrate our victories.

We have set a high bar for this conference. But it requires an immense investment of time and resources. We need to determine how to meet that high standard while providing quality support and leadership in the field. Stay tuned!

Conclusion

The struggle to end capital punishment in this country has changed dramatically in a few short years. There are more opportunities than ever to change public policy in law and practice. In our 35 years, the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty has played an essential role in bringing about that change. We are in this struggle for the long-run.

Again welcome to this new iteration of *Lifelines* — our commitment and vision, however, remains the same.

Peace,

Diann

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NCADP Lifelines

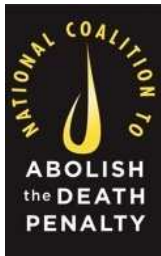
NCADP Lifelines is published by the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the nation's oldest organization devoted exclusively to abolishing capital punishment. Founded in 1976, NCADP unifies a network of more than 100 Affiliate organizations, advocates and volunteers, and prominent national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

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of our struggle is in sight. The latest action by the Connecticut legislature demonstrated that the death penalty continues to be in decline," Rust-Tierney said.

"Connecticut is another of the states that had all but abandoned the death penalty in practice, and was asking itself tough questions about whether the policy justified the risk of executing innocent people, and whether the policy was worth the drain on resources for crime victims and crime prevention programs. Clearly, their answer was that it was not." Connecticut had executed only one death row prisoner in the past half-century.

Connecticut Network at ALTI



In 2008, the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty held its first Abolitionist Leadership Training Institute (ALTI), training teams of staff and/or board members from state Affiliates in the fundamentals of campaigning.

Teams from Connecticut who attended in 2008 and 2009 set the stage for abolition legislation which passed but was vetoed in 2010 and which ultimately passed and was signed into law. Pictured here at the 2009 ALTI are Connecticut Network board members Judy Meikle and Sheila Denion with Ben Jones, Executive Director of CNADP.

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Faith Rising Summit Brings Together Leaders To Discuss Inequality of Opportunity

By David J. Harris

On September 21, 2011, Troy Anthony Davis and Lawrence Brewer were executed by their respective states — Georgia and Texas. Davis was an African American, and Brewer was white; yet in both instances, pleas to spare their lives came from black families.

In Davis's case, it was his own family, led by his sister Martina Correia, who had spent years working to prevent this outcome and has since succumbed to the cancer against which she had also struggled. In Brewer's case, it was the family of James Byrd who unsuccessfully lobbied against the death penalty for the man who had admitted to brutally murdering Byrd simply because he was black.

These two stories of state-imposed killings serve as a telling introduction to a March, 2012, gathering hosted by the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School. This event, *Faith Rising: Clergy, Racial Justice, and the Death Penalty*, brought together 30 faith leaders, activists, scholars, and policy experts to explore potential cures for inequality of opportunity in communities of color.

Black clergy must often minister to the families of victims and perpetrators. They can play a key role in making the voices of black families, so routinely ignored by our criminal justice system, more powerful and more heeded. *Faith Rising* followed sessions in Shreveport, Louisiana, which contributed to the elimination of a Confederate flag from the courthouse steps, and an historic meeting at the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial School in Los Angeles.

Charles Ogletree, Climenko Professor of Law at Harvard Law School and founder of the Houston Institute, opened the March meeting by reminding attendees of the history and legacy of struggle for equality in the United States. The participants were riveted by the compelling and challenging [video presentation](#) given by Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, an organization that represents the indigent and protects them from a legal system which for too long has ignored and denied their rights.

Faith Rising participants shared concerns for the high rates of incarceration that plague communities of color, and expressed a growing understanding of the system's costs, including imprisonment and capital punishment.



Organizers posed the question: Must we, as a society, spend exorbitant amounts of money pursuing selective capital prosecutions, almost always involving a white victim, while entire communities of color are starved for basic services and resources? Or, armed with more complete information about what actually works, would we act differently?

In recent years schools, libraries, youth programs, community centers, and mental health and substance abuse treatment programs scrounged for resources while our lawmakers continued to lavish funds on prisons and capital punishment prosecutions. Churches and mosques and other faith-based organizations have been left to pick up much of the work of cash-strapped state and community-based institutions.



Increasingly, clergy ensure that members of their congregations are fed, clothed, educated, and engaged in civic and social life. They recognize that the money devoted to juvenile halls, prosecutions, Super Max prisons and death rows could be more productively spent constructing truly safe, vibrant communities where children and adults have access to safe schools, healthy food, recreational space, jobs, and opportunities to develop their potential and to support their families

How do we redirect public investments from punishment toward programs that will prevent crime? How do we convince lawmakers that pursuing capital prosecutions will not make our neighborhoods safer or healthier? *Faith Rising* actively explored these questions.

We must translate inclusion and opportunity into action in communities across our nation. We must encourage community members to make their voices heard about what they believe to be most vital for them, their families, and their neighborhoods, regions, states and nation. The clergy play a critical role, spreading the word about what works and amplifying the voices of communities of color.

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Although there were differences among participants, there was a clear consensus that our communities need much more than punishment and surveillance. The African American community has long served as the conscience for the nation. The black church has been a central engine for change and progress even as it has sought to protect tradition. The challenges, illustrated by the recent executions of Troy Davis and Lawrence Brewer, remain with us as we work to transform our society from a land of punishment to a land of promise.

David J. Harris is the Managing Director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School. David has extensive experience in many civil rights issues from police brutality and racial



profiling, to redistricting and domestic violence, as well as fair housing and community development.

David served as founding Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston which was nationally recognized among fair housing organizations. He is a leading voice for civil rights and has spoken extensively on civil rights, regional equity and fair housing.



The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School honors and continues the work of one of the great civil rights lawyers of the twentieth century. Litigator, scholar and teacher, Charles Hamilton Houston dedicated his life to using the law as a tool to reverse the unjust consequences of racial discrimination. The Institute marshals the resources of Harvard and beyond to advance Houston's dreams for a more equitable and just society.

Books From the Abolition Library

In This Timeless Time: Living and Dying on Death Row In America
By Bruce Jackson and Diane Christian
University of North Carolina Press/Duke University Center for Documentary Studies, 2012

Books about capital punishment usually have a sense of urgency. By contrast, **In This Timeless Time's** tone is artistic, lyrical, unhurried, the title coming from a poem by a condemned inmate. Everyone else in prison is serving time. But nobody is sentenced to serve time on death row — you are sentenced to die. Death row is where you wait for the next step.

In 1979, Jackson and Christian got unusually free access to interview, film, and photograph Texas's condemned prisoners, producing a book and film named **Death Row**. The CD is included with **Timeless**, which is divided into several parts. The first is "Photos," black and white pictures from 1979 showing everyday life, but updated with 2011 comments about their subjects' fate.

The second, "Words," is a reflection on the filmmakers' thoughts on capital punishment. The third, "Working," explains the problems they faced filming behind bars. **Timeless** gains its moral strength by updating what no one knew in 1979. About half the men were executed, a few remain there, others were sent to serve life sentences. One was paroled. One was exonerated. No fate this random could be considered justice.



Today, many activists attack capital punishment head on. **Timeless** shows that you can creep up on it slowly, over time, then show how ugly it looks when looking back.

Anatomy of Injustice: A Murder Case Gone Wrong
By Raymond Bonner
Alfred A. Knopf, 2012

In **Anatomy of Injustice** Raymond Bonner — a former prosecutor and Pulitzer Prize winning correspondent for *The New York Times* — tells a disturbing story. In 1982, an elderly widow was murdered and possibly sexually assaulted, in South Carolina. Within days, Edward Lee Elmore, a black handyman with an IQ of 61, was arrested and sentenced to death.

Elmore faced the standard horrors of poor defendants in capital cases. Fortunately there was also a hero, Dana Holt, a law student working for the South Carolina Death Penalty Resource Center. **Anatomy** follows Holt as she digs through the facts.

In 2007 Elmore's sentence was reduced to life in prison based on the Supreme Court's ruling against executing people who are mentally disabled. This enabled Holt to file an appeal based on actual innocence. In 2011 a federal appeals court overturned his conviction based on incompetence and deception of local police and the unconscionable negligence of his original, drunken lawyer.

Despite this, prosecutors threatened to try Elmore again. Two weeks after **Anatomy** was published, Elmore, exhausted by decades in prison, agreed to an Alford plea in return for time served. He "just wanted some peace."

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There were at least three reasons why Ms. Coreia was so influential. First, her background as a mother, sister, and professional nurse who had served America as a veteran of the 1991 Persian Gulf War gave her personal credibility with a wide range of audiences. She was also a skilled and gifted organizer who built relationships based on shared objectives as well as mutual care and respect.

She worked closely with a number of organizations including Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. She served on the Board of Directors of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, and was the chair of Amnesty International's efforts to fight the death penalty in the United States.

But what had been most powerful about her advocacy was the fact that her struggle was more than an abstract argument against the death penalty. She bravely showed millions what it meant for the death penalty to hit home.

She and her family put a face on the too often invisible families who are part of the collateral damage of capital punishment. She demonstrated that in a rush to justice in the wake of tragic violence and murder, innocent families can be trampled underfoot by even the most well meaning police, politicians and media.

A strong voice for the families of the accused

Murder victims' family members have been increasingly critical and visible players in the capital punishment debate. In complementary fashion, the families of the accused have begun to come forward and make their voices heard. Over and over Ms. Correia told the world, "My brother is innocent." For years, she worked to expose the fact that there was no video, ballistics, DNA or physical evidence, that the police ignored another likely suspect, and that witness after witness recanted their testimony that he had fired the deadly shots.

Capital punishment's impact on innocents

Martina's unrelenting assertion that Troy was innocent gained sympathetic ears just as an ongoing series of exonerations had begun to shake the public's faith in prosecutors' motivations and tactics in capital cases.

Her work was powerful because her family's tragic story is a reflection of the fact that anyone and any family can get trapped in the nightmare of a wrongful conviction.

While reflecting on her death, Congressman John Lewis said, "Correia was a brave and courageous woman who was her brother's most stalwart advocate for clemency. She was an angel of mercy who sacrificed her health to win her brother's life."

NCADP Announces Key Appointments

The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the nation's largest and oldest anti-death penalty organization, announced two key additions to its team. **Jeremy Schroeder** joins the organization as National Strategy Counsel and **Felice Robinson** becomes Director of Administration.



Schroeder will be responsible for incorporating NCADP's strategic vision into its work with state and national Affiliate partners. In addition he will take the lead in coordinating the organization's Baseline Assistance Program that offers skills training and technical assistance to member Affiliates.

Previously, Schroeder was the executive director of the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty where he led the campaign that passed death penalty repeal legislation in that state, creating a fund for victims' services and law enforcement training. In prior positions he was deputy legislative and policy director of the Service Employees International Union, Healthcare Illinois and Indiana. He is a board member of Amnesty International USA. In addition to receiving an engineering degree from Marquette University, he is a graduate of the University of the District of Columbia School of Law.

Robinson began her anti-death penalty work in the 1990s, working to defeat an initiative that would have brought capital punishment to the District of Columbia. She later attended the Howard University School of Law where she received her law degree. Robinson also clerked for a District of Columbia Superior Court judge and worked for the Whitman Walker AIDs Clinic and the American Bar Association's Council on Legal Education Opportunity.



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Q&A: Laura Moye

Director of Amnesty International USA's Death Penalty Abolition Campaign

Editor's Note: Laura Moye has been an active voice for human rights and abolition of the death penalty since her days as a student activist. She has worked with AIUSA for the past 14 years. As part of her anti-death penalty work, Moye has been a leader in state legislative and clemency campaigns, including a campaign for a moratorium on and study of Georgia's death penalty.

Can you describe what you felt during the long battle to save Troy Davis?

There's no way I could have predicted the trajectory of the fight from those early days when we were focused on the immediate goal of stopping Troy's first of four execution dates in 2007. I felt frantic in the beginning. Nobody outside Savannah knew who Troy Davis was or cared.

We worked desperately to get a postcard action in the mail and held a small rally hoping the outcome would be different from our protests against the other scheduled executions. It was breathtaking to experience the amazing movement that grew around this case over four years.

Martina Correia was at the heart of the campaign. She kept us all in line. We could not feel despair because she never gave up hope or the will to fight. Also, Troy's life became synonymous with our cause; so there was never a moment when I felt we should accept defeat.

Even when we knew the parole board voted against him the day before his execution, we rallied almost a thousand people outside the prison in Georgia and held our heads high. The Davises enriched my life as did the many organizations and individuals who got involved with the struggle and gave of themselves so selflessly.

What was it like working with Martina?

I met Martina in the late 1990s. We worked together to build up Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and to be Amnesty's spokespersons and organizers against the death penalty. It was seven years before I worked with her on her brother's case.

Martina was great to work with. I learned a lot from her and she always made me laugh. She always talked my ear off on the phone. But I rarely minded because she would invariably crack me up with funny anecdotes about what happened to her that day. She really lived life to the fullest and lived with purpose and in the moment.



Martina didn't wallow around, despite the unimaginable pain she must have endured. She was a woman of action. Our team brainstormed an idea to canvass in Savannah, and she was the first to get out there with a clipboard. She rallied the small band of supporters in her community to hit the pavement, battling the heat and humidity.

What impact will the Troy Anthony Davis case have on the death penalty debate?

Hundreds of millions of people were exposed to the Troy Davis story given the deep media penetration. His story changed many minds about the death penalty. Gallup's poll showed a drop in support for the death penalty, a forty-year low, one week after the execution. I've heard many anecdotes how people's relatives and random people paid attention and were outraged in a way they had never been before. Troy's case deepened the crack in people's faith that the system works and is moral.

How has the movement changed in the years you've been a participant?

I got involved as an Amnesty student leader in the mid-1990s. I was compelled to work on this issue after hearing the powerful personal stories of those on the frontlines of the struggle.

My perception was that of a small band of faithful folks who were morally convicted to end this terrible system, but how we would do that and whether we could do that any time soon seemed very unclear and doubtful.

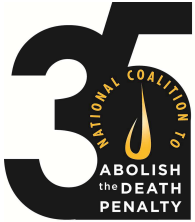
We have gotten bigger and more sophisticated over these past two decades. We are deploying strategies that are working and we can see a light at the end of the tunnel.

What new partnerships did the movement make, and how can they be sustained and leveraged?

We very intentionally reached out to African American folks in Georgia and nationally to join the campaign. The campaign really tapped into an energy for justice among people of color that was vibrant and inspiring.

We saw an outpouring of support from clergy and had important alliances with conservative voices. We are committed to continue engaging this diverse range of groups and are grateful to the many organizations in the movement that helped bring those voices to the forefront.

I still get Google alerts set to Troy's name. He became an important reference point about the brokenness of the system. I believe there will be a chapter about the Troy Davis campaign in the history book to be written about the abolition of the US death penalty.



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Why I Give to NCADP

By Paul O’Shea

Anti-death penalty work is a life-saving calling. It blends a person’s belief in the dignity of men and women with real life effect. The sooner we get to national repeal, the more lives will be saved.

In this work we meet people from all walks of life. All with the same dedication and determination to make an important difference in how this nation deals with justice, a bedrock principle. There’s a lot of pride in looking around and seeing that you are partnering with such bright, unselfish, singularly focused colleagues.



For me, working against the death penalty is a moral and ethical issue. As appalled and angry as I am with the execution of the innocent, with the rampant racism and the Russian roulette of the system, I always return to upholding the dignity and value of each human being.

It’s a marathon, not a sprint and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty is there at every checkpoint with critical support to help grassroots activists go the distance to end capital punishment.

I am honored to support an organization with the dedication, commitment and experience that will see us through to the finish line.

Paul O’Shea is Vice Chairman of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. During his business career he served in senior positions with corporations, consulting firms and financial services organizations. Following retirement he began working as a volunteer with the Capital Punishment Project of the ACLU, and joined NCADP in a volunteer role in 2005, the year he was elected to its board of directors. A graduate of Marquette University, he lives in Fairfax, Virginia.

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