

WORLD DAY AGAINST THE  
DEATH PENALTY: 10/10/10  
THEME: ABOLITION IN THE U.S.A.

## **RESOURCE KIT**

**AMNESTY**  
**INTERNATIONAL**



## ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

**Our Mission:** We are individuals from across the world standing up together for human rights. Our purpose is to protect people wherever justice, freedom and dignity are denied. We investigate and expose abuses, educate and mobilize the public to create a safer and more just world. We received the Nobel Peace Prize for our life-saving work in 1977.

**Our Vision:** Our vision is of a world in which every person - regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity and other distinctions - enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

**Our History:** Founded in 1961, our organization has campaigned successfully for the International Criminal Court and a UN Convention against Torture. Through our research and action, governments have been persuaded to stop human rights violations and change their laws and practices. Death sentences have been commuted. Torturers have been brought to justice. And prisoners of conscience have been released.

**Our Organization:** Amnesty International has a varied network of members and supporters around the world. At the latest count, there were more than 2.2 million members, supporters and subscribers in over 150 countries and territories in every region of the world. Although they come from many different backgrounds and have widely different political and religious beliefs, they are united by a determination to work for a world where everyone enjoys human rights.

AI is a democratic, self-governing movement. Major policy decisions are taken by an International Council made up of representatives from all national sections. AI's national sections, like AI USA, and local volunteer groups are primarily responsible for funding the movement. No funds are sought or accepted from governments for AI's work investigating and campaigning against human rights violations.

## JOIN US!

Become a member of Amnesty International today! Join us in the struggle for universal human rights. Our network of members around the world is what makes us powerful. It's easy! Just visit us at [www.amnestyusa.org/join](http://www.amnestyusa.org/join) or call 1-800-AMNESTY



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Cover illustration depicting U.S. death penalty states by the Goggles.

Kit produced by AIUSA's Death Penalty Abolition Campaign (DPAC),  
Aug. 26, 2010

## INTRODUCTION TO WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

All members around the world will join with our friends in the World Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, a coalition to which AI belongs, to mark the eighth annual World Day against the Death Penalty on October 10, 2010. World Day provides our global movement with an opportunity to publicly spotlight the death penalty and renew our call for its universal abolition.

This year's World Day focuses on abolition of the death penalty in the U.S. Therefore, activists around the world will be educating their communities about capital punishment in the U.S. in particular and will join with us in actions to encourage abolition in the U.S.

We encourage you to plan activities as soon as possible and to consider holding activities in the ten day period around October 10—October 6-15. We realize that October 10 is a Sunday and may not be ideal for various reasons for your group.

Please be sure to connect with your State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinator or Field Organizer (p.9-10) and consider inviting a speaker from a murder victims' family organization (p.13-14). These individuals have powerful stories to tell about their experience with violence and loss, yet they believe strongly that the death penalty is neither a moral nor practical solution.

### Why AI Works to End the Death Penalty

The death penalty is the ultimate affront to human rights, violating the right to life. It is an irreversible cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. We believe it is a barbaric practice that is often used for political, rather than constructive social, reasons. We work to end the death penalty around the world.



In the U.S., the application of the death penalty is marked by gross racial and economic bias, arbitrariness, and human error. It is very expensive (more than permanent imprisonment) and wastes resources that could be better used to prevent violence, support victims' families, and foster prisoner rehabilitation.

### Building Awareness—Creating Change!

The first step to creating change is raising awareness. The more people learn about the death penalty the less likely they are to support it. There are so many reasons to oppose the death penalty. We must meet people where they are and share with them our understanding of the ugly realities of capital punishment and why the time for abolition has come. Because the state carries out executions in the name of its citizens, we have an ethical responsibility to understand this system and how it implicates us all.

### IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE!

#### Did you know...

- *Since 1973, 138 people have been exonerated from death rows across the U.S.*
- *The state of Ohio tried to execute Rommell Broom on Sept. 15, 2009 for two hours, with his help, but failed. He may face execution again!*
- *About half of murder victims are people of color, but 77% of death row inmates' victims were white.*
- *Cameron Willingham was executed in 2004 for murdering his children by burning down their home. New forensics disproves the prosecutor's case and demonstrates that the fire should not have been ruled arson!*
- *The overwhelming majority of death row prisoners could not afford their own attorney at trial.*
- *It costs much more to execute someone than to permanently keep them in prison.*
- *Globally, the U.S. is one of the top five executing nations. 139 nations have ended executions.*

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Host a speaker (p.12-14)
- Show a film (p.6-7)
- Create informational posters with facts, or quotes from prominent political figures, governors, or court rulings on why different states, nations, and individuals oppose the death penalty.
- Set up a large map of the US with big red pins for executions that have been carried out last year (use other colors for pending executions).
- Create a display featuring the flags of abolitionist nations or US states.
- Sidewalk Chalking Projects (some campuses may require permission)
- Utilize your campus newspaper, TV or radio to get the word out about events: pitch a discussion on a regular show, create a promo for an event, guest write an article, etc.
- DIY (do-it-yourself) giant posters: The Rasterbator is an online rasterization program that takes your photo or image file and produces a file that you can print out on a normal printer and then assemble into a large poster: <http://homokaasu.org/rasterbator/wizard.gas>



- Make grave-markers to put on a lawn representing those executed. This could be all US prisoners executed since 1976 (when the death penalty resumed after being deemed unconstitutional in 1972) or last year, those executed in your state, or those who were likely innocent (a great source for these names and their stories is in the book "In Spite of Innocence" by Hugo Adam Bedau and Michael Radelet).
- Set up tea-lights in white paper bags marked with the names of death row exonerees. (Be sure to have a descriptive placard explaining the display and some factsheets people can take away).
- Connect with faith-based groups to host an interfaith event (resources: <http://tinyurl.com/dp-faith-res>)
- Ask a teacher if the death penalty can be a topic in an upcoming class. You may be able to find a relevant connection to the class syllabus. For example, English or Language Arts – a novel or play; History – a famous case in US history; Foreign Languages (pieces written in other languages on the subject); Math or Science – statistical studies (e.g. deterrence); Ethics; Religion; Philosophy and so forth.
- Set up a photographic exhibit (see p.16)





- Ask a theater group or department to consider a play, such as “The Exonerated” or “Dead Man Walking.” The Dead Man Walking School Theater Project uses the play adapted by Tim Robbins of Sr. Helen Prejean’s lauded book. The Project offers materials and is designed to be an interdisciplinary project, engaging a few subject departments at a school.

Learn more at [www.dmwplay.org/](http://www.dmwplay.org/)

*(Photo: Group performing “Dead Man Walking”)*

- Organize a panel discussion. We recommend a panel for people to explore the topic rather than a debate. Debates on charged issues can sometimes turn ugly or make people more wedded to their original ideas or opinions rather than make them think more openly. There are many different possible perspectives to include: religious, legal, historical, international, effectively dealing with violent crime, alternatives to the death penalty, victims’ families’ experiences and needs, and so forth. Provide time for Q&A.
- Social Networking – Facebook. Connect with AI’s Facebook profile, put facts about the death penalty in your status bar, change your profile photo with a death penalty image. Invite people to your activities through the events feature.

*Do you have additional ideas? Share them with us at our website - [www.amnestyusa.org/dpaw](http://www.amnestyusa.org/dpaw)*

## LIST OF FILMS

There are several great films that are very illuminating about the death penalty and that bring the issues to life. Check with your Regional Office or DPAC (p. 10) if you’d like to borrow a copy of the film with an asterisk (\*).

### “After Innocence”

This documentary tells the true life, compelling stories of exonerated prisoners. It examines the trials and tribulations waiting for them upon their release from prison. It also examines the U.S. justice system and the flaws that led to the wrongful conviction of these men. 2005. 95 min.

### “At the Death House Door” \*

An investigation of the wrongful death of Carlos DeLuna, who was executed in Texas on December 7, 1989, after prosecutors ignored evidence inculcating a man, who bragged to friends about committing the crimes of which DeLuna was convicted. 2008.

### “Dead Man Walking”

This acclaimed film traces the relationship between a death row inmate and the nun to whom he turns for spiritual guidance in the lead up to his execution. The film explores the brutality of the crime and the punishment without taking an overt abolitionist position. Starring Sean Penn and Susan Sarandon. 1995. 122 min.



### “Deadline”

This documentary explores two of the most significant, yet unexamined, events in the history of American capital punishment - the abolition of the death penalty in 1972 and the momentous debate in Illinois in 2002 over clemency for all of the state’s death row inmates. DVD and discussion guide: [www.deadlinethemovie.com](http://www.deadlinethemovie.com). 2004. 90 min.

**“The Empty Chair” \***

Four stories of murder victim’s families reliving the crimes and confronting the loss of loved ones. Reactions range from revenge and desire for punishment to searching for forgiveness and healing. With commentary by Sister Helen Prejean. 2003. 52 min. [www.justiceproductions.org](http://www.justiceproductions.org)

**“The Execution of Wanda Jean”**

An unflinching investigation of the role that poverty, mental health, race, and sexuality play within the criminal justice system. Wanda Jean Allen was an attractive young woman with what many considered to be an appealing personality. She was also an African-American lesbian whose low IQ indicated borderline retardation. By the age of 29, Wanda Jean had killed twice - and would become one of the most controversial death-row inmates in recent history. 2004. 90 minutes. [www.hbo.com/docs/programs/wanda](http://www.hbo.com/docs/programs/wanda)

**“The Exonerated” \***

Susan Sarandon and Danny Glover star in this film based upon the stage play of the same name. Actual court depositions, transcripts, letters, and interviews comprise the chilling and moving script that chronicles the stories of six wrongly convicted death row inmates. 2005. 90 minutes.

**“The Green Mile”**

Set on Death Row in a Southern prison in 1935, this is the story of the cellblock’s head guard, who develops a poignant, unusual relationship with one inmate who possesses a magical gift that is both mysterious and miraculous. 1999. 188 min.

**“Interview with an Executioner” \***

This documentary goes behind the scenes in a Mississippi Penitentiary during the 14 days leading up to the execution of Edward Earl Johnson. Don Cabana, the executioner, recounts the chilling experience of the execution of Johnson, who maintained his innocence until the end with his final words - “I want you to know exactly what you are doing when you execute me. I want you to remember every last detail, ‘cause I am innocent.” 14 min. Also available in Spanish.

**“Juan Meléndez - 6446”**

Juan Meléndez was sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. A Puerto Rican migrant farmer raised in New York City, Meléndez was accused of murder in Florida. While claiming his innocence, Meléndez was convicted and put on death row for 17 years, before being exonerated. 49 min. Also available in Spanish.

**“Race to Execution”**

By Rachel Lyon, this film follows the stories of two death row inmates and exposes how race infects America’s death penalty system. Tools and more information at [www.pbs.org/independentlens/racetoexecution/](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/racetoexecution/). 2006. 54 min.

**“The Thin Blue Line”**

Through the use of reenactments of the crime, photo montages, film clips, and interviews, this is a reconstruction and investigation of the 1976 murder of a Dallas policeman and the subsequent arrest and sentencing to death of a man who claims to be innocent. 1988. 101 min.

**“Too Flawed to Fix” \***

A powerful documentary that explores and exposes the irreparable flaws in the criminal justice system by examining the 13 individuals who were wrongfully convicted and released from Illinois’ death row. 2002. 1 hr. and 15 min. versions available. To order the video, email: [tooflawedtofix@hotmail.com](mailto:tooflawedtofix@hotmail.com). A study guide is also available.

**“The Trials of Daryl Hunt”**

This documentary offers a deeply personal story of a wrongfully convicted man who spent twenty years in prison (though not death row) in North Carolina for a crime he did not commit. 2006. 106 minutes. <http://www.breakthrufilms.org/>

## RESOURCES INFORMATION AND MATERIALS

AIUSA's Main Death Penalty Page: [www.amnestyusa.org/abolish](http://www.amnestyusa.org/abolish)

AIUSA's Death Penalty Resource Page:

<http://tinyurl.com/dp-res-pg>

- Death Penalty Fact Sheets

Topics: International Human Rights Standards, Trends, Innocence, Cost, Race, Arbitrariness, Deterrence, Lethal Injection, Medical Ethics, Mental Illness, The "Voluntary" Death Penalty, Rights of Foreign Nationals, The Federal Death Penalty

- Annual DP Stats Worldwide Report (rel. March/April)
- Up-to-date List of Scheduled Executions
- Death Penalty Curriculum Guide
- PowerPoint presentation, "Understanding the Death Penalty" (available from DPAC@aiusa.org)

**Useful Links:**

- Excellent source on the US death penalty: Death Penalty Information Center [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)
- National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty - [www.ncadp.org](http://www.ncadp.org)

**Stickers and Buttons Available:**



*Willingham stickers ("Executed. Innocent.") and "Abolish" (square and circular) buttons can be ordered from DPAC or your Regional Office (p.10)*

## RESOURCE PEOPLE

If you need help with your activities or want to connect with other groups in your area, here are people that can help.

**Your State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinator (SDPAC)**

SDPACs are volunteer leaders who keep up with death penalty developments in their state. They have a lot of knowledge about the issue. They can help connect you to local speakers, share with you the focus of the work in your state and how you can get plugged in. Please contact your SDPAC to let them know you are organizing activities for the World Day.

**Your Field Organizer in your Regional Office**

Field Organizers are the primary activist support staff people. Your Field Organizer can help you access materials in the Regional Office, connect you to other activists and assist you if you need help figuring out your activities.

**The Death Penalty Abolition Campaign (DPAC) in the Washington Office**

DPAC can help you find materials and resources for your activities and answer your questions about the issues, as AIUSA's issue experts on capital punishment. Please contact your Field Organizer for support first, but let DPAC know if you have issue-specific needs.

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*Are you interested in being an SDPAC? Let us know and we'll send you info (email [bevans@aiusa.org](mailto:bevans@aiusa.org)).*

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## SPEAKER RESOURCES

### Witness to Innocence

Provides support to those who have been exonerated from death row. Their website provides information on potential speakers. [www.witnesstoinnocence.org/speakers.htm](http://www.witnesstoinnocence.org/speakers.htm)

### The Journey of Hope ... from Violence to Healing

Led by murder victim family members, death row family members, family members of the executed, the exonerated, and others. Journey of Hope conducts public education speaking tours and addresses alternatives to the death penalty. The website includes a list of speakers and a useful guide on Hosting a Speaking Event. [www.journeyofhope.org](http://www.journeyofhope.org)

### Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights and Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation

(see p.13-14)

## HOW TO: TABLE EFFECTIVELY

Tabling is an effective way to make AI more visible in your community. Your group can publicize its current work, announce upcoming events, recruit new members, and raise funds by tabling. Tabling can also provide members of the public an opportunity to take action. Possible venues include community festivals, art shows, special events, ethnic festivals, and local coffeehouses and bookstores. Schools venues also include outside of dining halls, the student union, school library or any place many students pass by.

### TIPS ON TABLING:

- **Appearance is important.** Attractive and well-organized materials and visuals will catch people's eye. Videos or slide shows on a loop or images in a free-standing document holder are useful.
- **Table with at least two people.** Engage more people at the same time; have a buddy to help with questions, spot you if you need a restroom run, keep up spirits if you encounter a negative individual.
- **Be proactive, polite and friendly.** Stand behind or in front of your table, rather than sit, to be proactive and inviting. Be mindful of your body language. Don't expect that everyone who is supportive of the issues will approach your table. Don't assume those passing by are disinterested. When a passer-by gives you eye contact or looks at your table, greet them and have a short phrase to invite them to the table, e.g. "Hi there! How are you? Can I tell you about a human rights action we're asking people to help us with today – it won't take much time and it's free!" Humor can break the ice, but avoid sarcasm. Cookies and baked goods are often a useful lure.
- **Feature 2-4 actions on your table.** You don't want to have so many that you cannot retain information about them all and you don't want to have so few that you miss an opportunity to promote a couple of issues and demonstrate the diversity of AI's human rights agenda. Memorize at least two mini-talks about at least 2 actions. You must be able to describe the situation and the action in about 1 minute. You should also be able to answer basic questions about AI.
- **Know what your ask is.** Have a finite number of asks and prioritize them. For example: sign our petition on prisoner X; sign our postcard action on country Y; join our mailing list; make a contribution/ buy a sticker or button. You will sense how much you can ask someone, so take it one ask at a time.
- **Troubleshooting.** Don't spend a lot of time with people who are clearly trying to push your buttons or just enjoy arguing. Get them to do your actions and try to move them along politely so that you don't miss other passers-by. It's perfectly normal not to have the answers for all questions – tell them you are not sure, but they could either look at the website, or if they give you their contact information you'd be happy to get back to them (but don't say this unless you really intend to get back to them).
- **Sign-up sheet and money jar.** Don't miss the opportunity to get people's contact info so that you can add them to your email list and invite them to upcoming meetings and activities. You may find new group members or valuable supports—so, always follow-up! Also, a simple money jar (if the venue permits) gives you an opportunity to raise funds for stamps and supplies and make a contribution to AIUSA to help support the organization's work. Be prepared to tell someone what the funds will be used for. If you have someone's attention, ask them if they're a member of AI and encourage them to become one (brochures available from Regional Offices - p.10)

### SUPPLY CHECKLIST:

*(Check with your Regional Office or DPAC for supplies p.10).*

- Table - reserve a table with the venue or secure your own well in advance.
- Banner - should be clearly visible from a distance.
- Information - make copies of concise handouts.
- Flyers - have info about your upcoming events.
- Sign In Sheet - get people's contact information and follow up with them about future events.
- Action Opportunities - supply background information on opportunities for immediate action.
- Pens, clipboards, paperweights (rocks work).
- Donation Jar - raise funds for AI's work.



## HOW TO: HOST A SPEAKER

Perhaps one of the most powerful ways to educate and open people's minds on the issue of the death penalty is to hear the personal stories of those who have had direct involvement with the issue. Murder victims' family members and death row exonerees are among the most powerful. Defense attorneys, law enforcement and current or former prosecutors and judges can also be compelling. Ask your SDPAC, DPAC or Field Organizer for ideas and contacts (p.9-10).

### Planning for your event

- Begin planning for a speaker event as early as possible; Set clear goals for the event.
- In your invitation to speakers, be clear about what you want them to discuss.
- Clarify whether each speaker expects a fee, honoraria or other expense and how and when the speaker expects to be paid.
- Develop a fundraising plan if you need funds to cover any event costs. Students: see what is available from your Student Activities office.
- Develop a clear agenda, with times, for the event. Don't forget to schedule time at the beginning to introduce Amnesty International and at the end to ask people to take action and join.
- Plan time for a question and answer period after the speaker's talk, and think of other creative ways to encourage audience participation, such as breaking into small discussion groups.
- Assign someone to act as host for the guest and ask them to give the introduction at the event.
- Communicate clearly and regularly with the speaker before the event to get information about him or her, and share information about your group and the event.
- Develop an outreach plan to attract people to the event. (p.17-19)
- Ask all guests to sign in, and follow up with newcomers after the event.

### On the day of your event

- If possible, arrange to meet speakers when they arrive, and take them to their hotel or other destination.
- Once they arrive, plan to spend time with them to prepare for the event.
- Allow time for the speaker to eat if food will be served at the event.

### During the event

- Keep time. Before the event, let the speaker know how you will give time cues.
- If your speaker is attending multiple events, allow breaks in between speaking engagements.

### Following the event

- Send a thank you note to your speaker.
- Report the success of your event to your regional office and consider posting a review and photos on the AIUSA website and Facebook.

### Other things to consider

- If hosting for more than one day, remember to schedule some free time and stick to it.
- Make suggestions of things the speaker can do in your community during free time.
- Remember the speaker may be away from home for a long time and need access to shopping, laundry facilities, and other basic needs.
- Try to connect the speaker to groups they may be interested in networking with.

### Questions to ask the speaker:

- What is their complete contact information? Who to contact in an emergency?
- Do they have any special needs?
- What equipment do they need for their presentation? (e.g. slide projector, video player)
- Do they have a preference for the room set-up?
- Can you take photos of them?
- Are they available to do interviews with press?
- Can they provide a bio and photo to use for flyers or other promotional materials?
- What else do they need to feel comfortable? Be especially sensitive to the needs of trauma survivors.

### Information to share with the speaker:

- Contact person and contact information
- What your group has been working on
- Goals for the event
- A complete agenda for the event
- Number of people expected at event
- A description of the expected audience

## SPEAKER RESOURCE: MURDER VICTIMS' FAMILIES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights (MVFHR) is an international, non-governmental organization of family members of murder victims and family members of the executed, all of whom oppose the death penalty in all cases. We view the death penalty as a profound violation of human rights.

Having all suffered a tragic loss, MVFHR members have come in different ways and times to the understanding that the death penalty does not help us heal and is not the way to pursue justice for victims.

MVFHR challenges the assumption that all families of murder victims support the death penalty and frames the death penalty as both a victims' issue and a human rights issue.

Through public education, advocacy, and organizing, we amplify the voices of victims' families who oppose the death penalty and provide anti-death penalty campaigns with victims' uniquely compelling testimony. As well, we draw attention to the ways in which the death penalty harms the families of those executed, and we seek to achieve recognition for these families as victims of traumatic loss.



Photo © Scott Langley



Two of MVFHR's special projects are the "No Silence, No Shame" project, which focuses on how the death penalty harms the families of those executed, and the "Prevention, Not Execution" project, which aims to end the death penalty for people with severe mental illness.

MVFHR speakers can address such topics as:

- Some reasons that victims' family members oppose the death penalty
- Rethinking "closure"
- Working with victims: a guide for anti-death penalty activists
- Human Rights and Victim Justice
- Recognizing families of the executed as victims
- The death penalty and mental illness, from a victim perspective
- How to be both pro-victim and anti-death penalty

For more information, contact [info@mvfhr.org](mailto:info@mvfhr.org) or call 617-491-9600

Visit our website at [www.mvfhr.org](http://www.mvfhr.org)

# MVFHR

Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights

## SPEAKER RESOURCE: MURDER VICTIMS' FAMILIES FOR RECONCILIATION



Andre Smith  
Andre lost his son to murder.

*“One act of compassion can truly change the world in profound ways.”*

Founded in 1976, Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR) is a national organization of family members of victims of both homicide and executions who oppose the death penalty in all cases. MVFR includes people of many different perspectives. Because violent crime cuts across a broad spectrum of society, our members are geographically, racially and economically diverse.

MVFR in partnership with the states seeks to invite, strategically equip, and engage family members in state campaigns working to abolish the death penalty. Local family members work to educate about their needs and how the death penalty not only fails to meet those needs but in fact, further traumatizes families in the process.

MVFR also works to educate about trauma and how to effectively work with and support those who have experienced trauma.



Though we are not necessarily a speaker's bureau, we meet and work with a wide range of local family members in our work across the country. MVFR members, who are speakers, are often pleased to accept invitations to engagements. If you are interested in having a speaker come to your meeting or event, please call the national office at **877-896-4702**. Please be ready to answer these questions:

- Date and time of event**
- Type of event**
- Makeup of audience:**
- Type of speaker required:**
- Basics of the event**
- Bios of any other Speakers:**
- Honorarium** (\$100/day recommended)
- Travel/lodging assistance**  
(Please provide for all expenses related to travel if long-distance travel is necessary).

We will check in with possibilities and get back to you with suggested speakers. If you are interested, we will let our member know that you will be calling and will give you the contact information. From there, you and the member will make arrangements.



Rev. Cathy Harrington  
Cathy lost her daughter to murder.

*“Life is sacred and when we participate in the murder of another human being for any reason, it diminishes our own lives.”*

## HOW TO: RUN A GOOD DISCUSSION

- Ensure there is a clear facilitator who does not interject view points, but only plays the role of keeping the conversation on track and involving as many people as possible.
- Make the purpose of the discussion clear at the beginning.
- It may help to offer a few simple guidelines to keep the discussion respectful.
- Use respectful, calm tones at all times, and insist that participants remain respectful too.
- It is useful to have a presentation of information (e.g. speakers or film) to provide a solid context for a fruitful discussion. (Contact DPAC@aiusa.org for our PowerPoint presentation)
- Before launching the discussion, entertain questions about the background material.
- Prepare for common questions from various perspectives. Make sure you've read the background materials, and have some notes or supporting materials on hand.
- Stay on track. Make sure you can see a clock or a watch, or designate a timekeeper.
- Plan a schedule with time allotted to each activity. Having an agenda – and sticking to it – can help to keep things moving. Avoid programs that are longer than about 1.5 hours as participants may have busy schedules and may not be as enthusiastic about the subject as you. If there is a small group that wants to keep the discussion going, you may want to allow them to continue, but formally close the program so that others can leave.
- Ask questions. Sometimes it can be helpful to summarize and repeat participants' responses to check for understanding.
- Encourage participants to ask questions, and express their opinions and observations.
- Don't rush to fill every lull or pause – sometimes people legitimately need a moment to think. Break a silence by mentioning ideas or responses you have heard about in the past, and then ask individuals to share their observations and perspectives.
- Involving diverse perspectives may help you appeal to a wider audience and have a deeper discussion. However, be sure to keep the overall topic on track.



### Troubleshooting - How to handle difficult people:

- If someone is being rude or is taking the program off track, try the “ABC” method. Acknowledge the point (“that’s an interesting point”), create a Bridge (“but that’s a little different from the focus of tonight’s discussion”), Change the subject back (“What do you think about ... ?” or “Does someone have any thoughts about ... ?”).
- If someone is being a jerk (note: discern whether they have a strong opinion or whether they are truly being disrespectful to the group or an individual), politely call them out. For example, you could say, “I’m sorry you feel that way, but this is meant to be a discussion for everyone and it would be helpful if you would frame your ideas in a more respectful/less personalized way.”
- If someone is dominating the discussion, encourage them to step back while affirming their participation. For example, “that’s another great point, let’s see if someone who hasn’t spoken yet has anything to add.”

## HOW TO: SET UP A PHOTO EXHIBIT



Scott Langley is a professional photographer and one of Amnesty International's State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinators (SDPAC). He has documented some of his many experiences at various death rows, vigils and protests on behalf of prisoners.

He has generously allowed AI groups to show his compelling and informative photographs. Note: Scott is also open to speaking invitations alongside a display of his photos.

You have permission to download and display the photos (electronically or in print) for educational use, as long as you notify the photographer in advance (send an email with your name, city, state, and organization/school name to [info@deathpenaltyphoto.org](mailto:info@deathpenaltyphoto.org)).

### Display Options:

#### 1. Print photos to hang or display during your action.

High quality photos are available at [www.deathpenaltyphoto.org/dpaw](http://www.deathpenaltyphoto.org/dpaw) and can be printed for physical display. Display can be done in more formal ways such as using frames or easels. Or it can work in less formal ways, such as mounting them to foam core panels or neatly taping them to walls or propping them up on tables.

Please use the descriptive captions with the photos as most need to be given context to be understood. Please use a quality color printer and photo quality paper.

#### 2. Incorporate photos into a slideshow that can be presented digitally

Create your own PowerPoint presentation from the photos, or you can download the Troy Davis stay of execution presentation. This is a large file of 128 megabytes, so it will take some time to download. If you would like to preview the PowerPoint file as a PDF before committing to the large download, you can access a 1.5 megabyte preview.

If you have any questions or have technical difficulties, please contact Scott Langley at [info@deathpenaltyphoto.org](mailto:info@deathpenaltyphoto.org) or (518) 392-2810.

*Scott Langley at anti-death penalty demo*



## HOW TO: PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

- 1) Get clear on the details
- 2) Develop the tools
- 3) Cast the net
- 4) Personalize outreach
- 5) Follow-up

### 1) Get clear on the details

It's all about the 5 W's!

Everyone in your group should be able to rattle off the 5Ws and all your materials should clearly have this info:

- Who** (who's the event for (open to the public? RSVP?), who's organizing it, how to get more info?)
- What** (what type of event is it)
- When** (give date and day of the week as well as time)
- Where** (provide a link to a map or directions and information on transportation and parking)
- Why** (what's the purpose of the event)

### 2) Develop the tools

- a) Basic email and flyer

Write a basic text email (avoid graphics for folks whose email will scramble it up). Organize the information so that it is concise and the important info is featured at the top. Make a nicely laid-out version that you can send around as a PDF and print out. (See sample on next page). You have permission to use AI's logo for AI purposes.

- b) Handbill

You may want to also make a smaller version of the flyer (4 to a page or 2 to a page) – uses less paper, cheaper to reproduce, easy to hand out or leave piles of in places.

- c) Online invitations or advertisements (e.g. Facebook events)

- d) Media Advisory

(More info on page 19)

### 3) Cast the net

Brainstorm with your group organizations, places and individuals to get the materials and information to. What groups might have an interest in your topic? What are the ways folks get information in your community? (e.g. ad in the local weekly happenings newspapers, bulletin boards, announcements in classes, online methods, etc.).

Plaster the flyers around, use the handbills to hand out to folks at your tabling events or at well-trafficked pedestrian places and other types of events.

Send the media advisory out to your local media. If you're at a school, be sure to take advantage of your school newspaper and other outlets. Ask your Field Organizer (in your Regional Office) for help with this.

Give everyone in your group a stack of materials to distribute and ask folks to commit to getting them out and have folks let you know where they will put the flyers to avoid redundancy and gain firmer commitments.

### 4) Do personalized outreach

The best way to get folks to come is to make as many personalized appeals as possible. Don't rely on email, ask people in person where possible or call them up. Ask your friends and classmates to come – talk it up with enthusiasm. Remind them.

### 5) Follow-up

Ask folks who put up flyers to check on them as flyers often get pulled down and sometimes damaged or defaced. Make follow-up calls to press to ensure they received your media advisory.

Remind folks you invited. People usually need to hear/read about the event at least three times before they commit to attending.

Sample  
Flyer

Attention getting title,  
prominently placed

# INNOCENT ON DEATH ROW?

## Who Is Troy Davis?

WHY IS A DEATH ROW PRISONER AT RISK OF EXECUTION DESPITE  
COMPELLING CASE OF INNOCENCE?

- 7 OF 9 WITNESSES RECANTED THEIR TESTIMONY AGAINST HIM
- ONE OF THE 2 REMAINING WITNESSES HAS BEEN IMPLICATED BY MANY AS THE REAL SHOOTER
- NO PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OR WEAPON LINKS DAVIS TO THE CRIME

Background info that  
doesn't stand out more  
than the basic info

**Date: Oct. 28 (Thurs)**

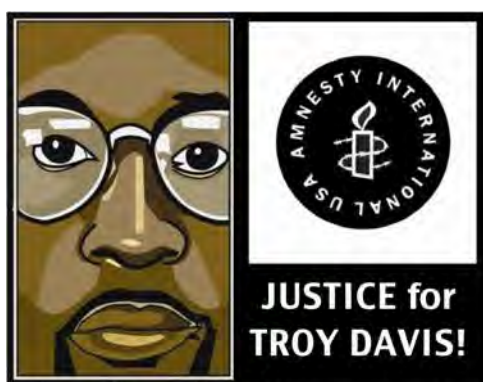
Where, When prominent  
Contact person provided

**Time: 7pm**

**Location: GSU Sparks Hall, Rm 412**

**For More Info:** Laura Smith, [dummyemail@yahoo.com](mailto:dummyemail@yahoo.com), 404 123

Eye catching graphic



[justicefortroy.org](http://justicefortroy.org)

No more than 2  
fonts on flyer. Don't  
clutter with too much  
info or graphics. Leave  
some "white space"  
Keep it simple!

## EVENTS AS MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

Most events can be media opportunities. Amnesty International groups can contact the media about vigils, demonstrations, holiday card actions, guest speakers, protests, art shows, and many other activities.

### Getting the media to cover your event:

- Notify the media at least 48 hours before your event if possible.
- Write a media advisory and fax it to the local Associated Press and any other local media you can.
- Call or email the Associated Press and ask if they can list your event in the “daybook,” a calendar that local media read to learn of upcoming events.
- Time your event to make it convenient for newspaper coverage. As many weekly newspapers go to print on a Monday or Tuesday, time between a weekend event and going to press is short.
- Take photographs at your event and submit them electronically within 48 hours to your weekly paper. Make sure to label each photograph in the e-mail when you submit it. Strong visual events could also interest local television – new and creative ideas are always worth trying.
- Use Amnesty International banners or posters with “Amnesty International” clearly written on them at your event. Bystanders can identify you and if a picture is published it will indicate the host of the event.
- Invite celebrities, such as local politicians, actors, sports figures, musicians, and others in the public eye, to increase interest in an event. Brief the celebrity on the reason for your event and why it should be important to them. *(Please note that if you are considering approaching a regional or national figure, you should always talk with staff at your Regional Office. They may be able to help you approach people and it is a crucial step in avoiding multiple people from Amnesty making requests to one particular person.)*
- Consider inviting an expert speaker from a local university.

## WRITING MEDIA ADVISORIES

- A media advisory should simply announce an event, along with relevant details (who-what-when-where-why). It should be as short and to the point as possible. It should also contain a key message along with a quote stating AI’s position on a relevant issue. Keep the message clear and concise, and use your follow up call as an opportunity to provide additional information.
- Send the media advisory to all relevant local media by fax or e-mail ideally one week before the event, but at least two or three days in advance.
- Identify the person you want to send it to beforehand. Address faxes and letters to them directly, and ask to speak to them when you follow up with phone calls. Get e-mail addresses whenever possible, so you can minimize the risk of individuals not receiving your advisory via fax.
- Follow up with a phone call and e-mail one to two days before the event, and perhaps again the day of the event as a reminder. Keep your conversation brief and courteous at all times. When following up with journalists, ask if they have a moment to speak since they are often on deadline; if this is the case, inquire when you should call back. The best time to place these calls is usually during the morning hours.
- Be prepared to resend the advisory to those who say they have not received it.

## APPROACHING THE DEATH PENALTY: THINGS TO CONSIDER

### **Open Attitude**

AI has a very clear position that the death penalty is wrong in all circumstances because it is a human rights violation. We understand that not everyone shares this view, despite the growing international consensus in favor of abolition. The death penalty can be a very charged issue that can push people's emotional buttons. This may make it difficult to start a conversation on the topic or engage in a respectful one. It is important to consider other points of view; after all, it is our hope that those not persuaded to our position will at least consider it. In your efforts to engage people in conversation, listen and find out what is important to them and try to engage them where they are. There's nothing wrong with a spirited discussion, but use the opportunity to inject information and avoid getting your buttons pushed.

### **Look for Common Ground**

There is a lot of room for agreement. It should be easy to find agreement on fundamental principles of fairness. For example, almost everyone can agree that people who commit horrible crimes should be held accountable for their actions and victims and their loved ones should be given support. Also, issues of fair application of the system and the protection of the innocent are areas for common ground.

### **Be Sensitive to Victims' Needs**

It is important not to speak for victims' loved ones, especially if you are not one. Victims' families are a diverse group of people with diverse views on the death penalty. It is best to acknowledge this and make it known that there are plenty of families who don't feel the death penalty is appropriate, even though those who call for it are often more visible. Additionally, avoid getting backed into a corner that being against the death penalty automatically means you care less about victims and their families.

### **Be Careful with Religious Arguments**

Many proponents of the death penalty have religious reasons for their position. Ironically, most of the world's religions have plenty of teachings that can be used to provide a strong argument against the death penalty. Be careful when challenging someone's belief in the death penalty to not also challenge their religious faith. It's OK to interject other religious viewpoints, but often, addressing the facts about the application of the death penalty may be more useful.

### **It's OK not to have all the answers!**

You don't need to have all the answers to engage in a discussion. The more conversations you have, the more you can learn about the issues and what types of points make an impact. If you don't know something, feel free to ask for an opportunity to look into it and follow up. Making up information will lose you more credibility than saying "I'm not sure. That's a great question. Let me find out and get back to you."

## PREP DISCUSSION FOR AI GROUPS

Before taking on a death penalty event, please discuss with your AI group the overall subject so they can understand AI's position and be prepared for interactions with others as representatives of AI.

Have someone in the group who is a good facilitator lead the discussion. Use the questions below and leave time for people to answer. Use the answers below to fill in any gaps. The facilitator should do some background reading to help educate the group. We also recommend using the quiz (p.23) as a way to gauge the knowledge of your group and help them learn some of the basic facts.

### **What if individuals in the group support the death penalty?**

Not everyone who joins AI is likely to support all of AI's positions. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions and should not be made to feel bad for having a different perspective. We ask that all AI members keep an open mind on various perspectives, understand AI's position and be prepared to articulate it, even if it is not their own.

## THE DEATH PENALTY AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

### **In what cases does AI oppose the death penalty?**

AI opposes the DP in all cases as a violation of human rights.

### **What articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are violated by the death penalty?**

The right to life, freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and all the articles on equality before the law and due process.

### **Can you explain why the death penalty would be considered cruel, inhuman, and degrading even for someone who committed an especially brutal murder?**

How society treats someone should be based on its highest values rather than mimicking the brutality of the worst offender. The death penalty is cruel and inhuman on its own, we don't compare it to the crime committed. Note: the US Constitution says "cruel and unusual", but the UDHR says "cruel, inhuman and degrading".

### **Can you explain why human rights standards would prohibit the government's right to take life?**

Human rights, in part, are about limiting government power over its citizens to ensure that human dignity is protected. Taking life diminishes its value, no matter whose life is at stake. Also, because governments can not give or return life once taken, it is too great a power to give to these human institutions, which are subject to mistakes and bias. Furthermore, governments can keep people safe from violent offenders without the death penalty.

### **Can you explain how the right to life is not taken by AI to include opposition to abortion?**

Because the issue of abortion is controversial, like the death penalty, it would be better to stick to the death penalty. If someone wants to challenge AI for not being anti-abortion, it would be better to respectfully ask to keep the topics separate as you may miss the opportunity to discuss the death penalty. Officially, AI is against the criminalization of abortion and does not view abortion as a violation of the right to life. AI frames the issue more around the rights of women. (AI has opposed forced abortions and sterilizations).

### **Does AI care less about victims of murder than people who commit murder?**

Opposing the death penalty does not mean opposing justice for those who have suffered a horrible loss. AI does not believe in violating human rights to address human rights violations. A murder is the violation of the right to life and so is the death penalty. AI has fought for accountability and justice for victims for decades - we do not want there to be more victims.

# DEATH PENALTY FACTS

Updated Aug. 2010

**The death penalty defies international human rights standards.** Over two-thirds of the countries in the world – 139 – have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice. In 2008, 93% of all known executions took place in five countries - China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the USA.

**The death penalty is racially biased.** Since 1977, the overwhelming majority of death row defendants (77%) have been executed for killing white victims, even though African-Americans make up about half of all homicide victims.

**The death penalty claims innocent lives.** Since 1973, 138 people have been released from death rows throughout the country due to evidence of their wrongful conviction. In this same time period, more than 1,000 people have been executed.

**The death penalty is not a deterrent.** FBI data shows that all 14 states without capital punishment in 2008 had homicide rates at or below the national rate.

**The death penalty costs more and diverts resources from genuine crime control.** The greatest costs associated with the death penalty occur prior to and during trial, not in post-conviction proceedings. Even if all post-conviction proceedings (appeals) were abolished, the death penalty would still be more expensive than alternative sentences.

**The death penalty disregards mental illness.** The execution of those with mental illness or “the insane” is clearly prohibited by international law. In the USA, Constitutional protections for those with other forms of mental illness are minimal, however, and dozens of prisoners have been executed despite suffering from serious mental illness.

**The death penalty is arbitrary and unfair.** Almost all death row inmates could not afford their own attorney at trial. Local politics, the location of the crime, plea bargaining, and pure chance affect the process and make it a lottery of who lives and dies. Since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976, 80% of all executions have taken place in the South (37% in Texas alone).

**The death penalty violates the rights of foreign nationals.** 26 foreign nationals have been executed in the United States since 1988. Virtually none had been informed, upon arrest, of their right to communicate with their consular representatives.

**The death penalty can never be “voluntary.”** A decision taken by someone on death row to end his or her life through execution can never be consensual. Moreover, it cannot disguise the fact that the state is involved in a premeditated killing. There have been 135 “volunteer” executions since 1977.

**The federal death penalty is arbitrary and overreaching.** The federal death penalty can be enacted in any state or territory of the United States, even in states that do not have the death penalty. Currently, there are 61 people on federal death row.

More information on each of these issues is available at [www.amnestyusa.org/abolish/](http://www.amnestyusa.org/abolish/)

## QUIZ: THE DEATH PENALTY IN PRACTICE

### QUESTIONS

#### TRUE OR FALSE?

1. The death penalty deters murder.
2. “Life without Parole” (permanent imprisonment) is a more expensive sentence than the death penalty.
3. Most murders are committed by people of one race against those of a different race.
4. People of color are murdered more frequently than whites, proportionate to their numbers in the general population.
5. Those who murder people of color represent about 80% of those who have been executed.
6. Most people on death row could afford a lawyer.
7. 29 people have been wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death since the 1970s in the US.
8. DNA is the main reason for death row exonerations.
9. Belarus is the only European country with the death penalty.
10. In 2009, most executions in the world happened in these five countries: China, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the U.S.A.



## DEATH PENALTY QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1) False. There are numerous studies about deterrence. A few claim the death penalty deters murder, but 88% of former and current heads of the US's top academic criminologist associations reject the idea that the death penalty deters crime. When looking at states with and without the death penalty, the non-death penalty states have lower murder rates. Most murders are crimes of passion and not pre-meditated.
- 2) False. A death sentence is far more costly than life without parole. The legal expenses are much higher in capital cases. States spend millions more dollars on the death penalty than they would if all death row prisoners had life without parole sentences.
- 3) False. Most murders are intra-racial (within a racial group), not inter-racial.
- 4) True. About half of murder victims are African-American.
- 5) False, it's the opposite – 77% of those executed were convicted of killing white victims. The race of the victim is the strongest indicator of racial bias, as opposed to only looking at the race of perpetrators. People of color who murder whites are far more likely to be sentenced to death than whites who murder people of color.
- 6) False. An overwhelming majority of death row inmates could not afford a lawyer and had court-appointed lawyers. Even with public defenders who care about their clients, these lawyers are often overloaded with cases and under-resourced. There have also been horror stories of “the sleeping lawyer” or “drunk lawyer” and in Georgia 5 men on death row had their own attorneys call them a racial slur in court!
- 7) False, as of Dec., 2009, 138 people have been exonerated and released from death row. There are estimates of at least a dozen who have been wrongfully executed in recent decades (see the report “Reasonable Doubts” by Equal Justice USA -[www.ejusa.org](http://www.ejusa.org)).
- 8) False. It is true that DNA is a powerful tool, especially in rape cases. However, the majority of death penalty cases do not have biological material that can be DNA-tested. Most of the exonerations from death row were not based on DNA. Prosecutorial and police misconduct and mistaken eyewitness identifications have played large roles in wrongful convictions. We cannot assume that DNA will be the main way to prevent wrongful convictions in capital cases.
- 9) True. Only Belarus has the death penalty in Europe and the European Union has banned it. South Africa banned it when it abandoned apartheid. South Africans studied the US death penalty and concluded it was not good for a country trying to move toward racial equality. Most of Latin America does not practice the death penalty. Two-thirds of the world's nations do not use the death penalty.
- 10) True.

Great sources for more information: [www.amnestyusa.org/abolish](http://www.amnestyusa.org/abolish), [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)



## TAKE ACTION!

### STATE FOCUS

AI USA has prioritized our work against the death penalty on the U.S. because of the enormous significance abolition here would mean for global abolition and because U.S. activists have a stronger impact on U.S. authorities than do our international allies. In the U.S., capital punishment is primarily a state-by-state issue, rather than a federal issue (though the federal government and military have the death penalty).

If you live in a death penalty state, we encourage you to contact your SDPAC (see p. 9) to find out what your state abolition community's strategy is and how you can promote actions that can help further those goals. If you're in a non-death penalty state, we encourage you to look at the national actions below.

States w/out DP

States w/ DP



### FOCAL CASES

Please help us promote urgent actions on behalf of featured U.S. death row prisoners. The cases AI selects often symbolize problems with the overall death penalty system. Help us to gather signatures on petitions for these individuals and use the opportunity to talk with people about the death penalty overall and why it must go!



**Reggie Clemons** was sentenced to death in St. Louis, Missouri as an accomplice in the 1991 murder of two young white women, Julie and Robin Kerry, who plunged from the Chain of Rocks Bridge into the Mississippi River. Two other black youths were also convicted, including Marlin Gray (executed in 2005). Clemons has consistently maintained his innocence. His case illustrates many of the flaws in the U.S. death penalty system. Petitions are needed and available at: [www.amnestyusa.org/reggie](http://www.amnestyusa.org/reggie)

**Troy Davis** was sentenced to death in Savannah, Georgia in 1991 for the murder of a white police officer. No physical evidence links him to the crime and since the trial, seven of the nine key witnesses have recanted or contradicted their testimony. Davis has faced three execution dates and once came within ninety minutes of execution. On August 24, 2010, a federal judge denied his petition seeking relief on grounds that he is innocent. He is at risk of execution, though he intends to appeal the decision. Petitions are needed and available at: [www.amnestyusa.org/troy](http://www.amnestyusa.org/troy)



(Photo: Virginia Davis and her son, Troy Davis)

### URGENT ACTION APPEALS

Visit our action page to download the latest actions on behalf of individual's facing execution  
<http://tinyurl.com/dp-actions>

## TELL US HOW IT WENT!

### FEEDBACK FORM

Name:

Group Name:

Activities your group did:

What sort of response did you receive from your community?

How many people signed action petitions and on which cases?

For activities that went well, why did you think they went well?

For activities that didn't go well, why did you think they didn't?

What would you do differently next time?

Did you find the resource kit useful?  
If so, what in particular was helpful? If not, why?

How can we improve the resource kit?

**THANKS SO MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO GIVE US FEEDBACK!**

Please send your responses to DPAC

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