

RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER OF REFORM JUDAISM

The Religious Action Center pursues social justice and religious liberty by mobilizing the American Jewish community and serving as its advocate in the nation's capital

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Memorandum

To: Rabbis

From: Becca Nagorsky, Legislative Assistant

Date: July 2003

Re: Juvenile Death Penalty

Background

From this day forward, I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death...I feel morally and intellectually obligated simply to concede that the death penalty experiment has failed. -- Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, 1994

For both intellectual and moral reasons, both the UAHC and the CCAR have formally opposed the death penalty for the past 40 years. The 1959 UAHC Biennial Resolution states, “we believe that there is no crime for which the taking of human life by society is justified, and that it is the obligation of society to evolve other methods in dealing with crime...We appeal to our congregants and to our co-religionists and to all who cherish God’s mercy and love to join in efforts to eliminate this practice [of capital punishment] which lies as a stain upon civilization and our religious conscience.” In 1999, the UAHC reaffirmed its opposition to the death penalty, and called for a national moratorium of the death penalty until the criminal justice system that imposes it resolves its deep-rooted problems.

The CCAR repeatedly has issued resolutions opposing the death penalty. Its 1979 reaffirmation of that position declares: “Both in concept and in practice, Jewish tradition found capital punishment repugnant, despite Biblical sanctions for it. For the past 2000 years, with the rarest of exceptions, Jewish courts have refused to punish criminals by depriving them of their lives. No evidence has been marshaled to indicate with any persuasiveness that capital punishment serves as a deterrent to crime.”

Since 1976, when the Supreme Court ruled to allow the re-establishment of the federal and state death penalty, 834 people have been executed. Concurrently, 107 death row inmates have been exonerated, many spending years on death row and coming within days of their executions. This statistic alone should be enough to convince us that the system by which the death penalty is administered is seriously flawed. To continue to sentence individuals to death is to accept that the lives of innocent people are being taken for crimes they did not commit. If concern about innocence is not a sufficient argument to end capital punishment, then the very real racial and economic disparities that pervade our system of capital punishment should convince us that the system is untenable. Almost all people sentenced to death are poor, and many have had incompetent legal counsel. Racial

minorities are over-represented on death row, and are more likely to receive a death sentence if their crime victims were white.

Juvenile Death Penalty

An area of concern that has yet to be redressed by the Supreme Court is the execution of those who committed their crimes as juveniles. In 1988, in *Thompson v. Oklahoma*, the Supreme Court ruled that the execution of those who committed their crimes as young as 15 are eligible for the death penalty. Since the Supreme Court last examined the issue, Washington, New York, Kansas, Montana and Indiana have abolished capital punishment for juvenile offenders. There is no law barring the execution of those under 18, although because of the lengthy appeals process, this has never happened.

In 2001, the U.S., Iran and Pakistan were the only countries in the world that reportedly executed juvenile offenders. In 2002, Texas was the only jurisdiction in the world that reportedly executed juvenile offenders. In 1992, the United States ratified the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Article 6(5) of this international human rights doctrine requires that the death penalty not be used on those who committed their crimes when they were below the age of 18. However, the U.S. reserved the right to execute juvenile offenders and is the only country with an outstanding reservation to this Article. International reaction has been highly critical of this reservation, and ten countries have filed formal objections to the U.S. position.

There are currently 80 juvenile offenders (all male) on death row and since 1976, 21 men have been executed for crimes committed as minors. Two thirds of the juvenile offenders on death row are African-American or Hispanic and two-thirds of the victims of juvenile death row offenders were white. Sixteen states and the federal government have a minimum age of 18 for execution (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington). Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, Wyoming have a minimum age for death penalty eligibility of 16 and Florida, Georgia, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Texas have a minimum age of 17. For more information on juvenile offenders on death row, see Death Penalty Information Center's Juveniles and Death Row: <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/juvchar.html#overview>.

U.S. law prohibits those under 18 from serving on juries, buying cigarettes, serving in the military, making medical decisions, entering into contracts, marrying and drinking alcohol precisely because adolescents are less mature than adults. The execution of a juvenile offender is contrary to fundamental principles of American justice, which punish according to the degree of intent and culpability and reserve the death penalty for only the "worst of the worst" offenders. Given that adolescents are less mature, they are less culpable than adults who commit similar acts but have no such explanation for their conduct. Moreover, because they are not fully developed, adolescents are more malleable and, therefore, far more capable of change and rehabilitation than adults.

Doctors, psychiatrists and brain researchers agree that adolescence is a transitional period of life in which a child is becoming an adult. An adolescent is at a crossroads of life where hormones, emotions, judgment and identity are all in a state of flux. In the last five years, scientists have found that the adolescent brain is far less developed than was previously thought. Dr. Deborah Yergelun-Todd of Harvard Medical School is one of the chief researchers in a study examining the relation between brain development and cognitive deficiency. She claims that underdevelopment of the frontal lobe makes adolescents "more prone to act with 'gut instinct.'" Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans have shown that even the most mature adolescents rely heavily on the amygdala, the instinctual part of the brain. The National Mental Health Association, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry all oppose the death penalty for juveniles. For more information on the scientific aspects of the juvenile death penalty, see the American Bar Association's Juvenile Justice Center at <http://www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/resources.html>.

Capital Punishment Today

1. Cruel and Unusual Punishment

In 1972, in the *Furman v. Georgia* decision, the United States Supreme Court invalidated existing capital punishment laws, holding that the death penalty violated the 8th Amendment's ban on "cruel and unusual punishment" because of its "arbitrary and capricious" application. However, with the creation of a new generation of capital punishment statutes promising less uncertainty in sentencing, the Supreme Court decided in the 1976 *Gregg v. Georgia* decision to allow for the reinstatement of capital punishment. Currently, 38 states and the federal government permit capital punishment.

In June 2002 in *Atkins v. Virginia*, the Court banned the execution of mentally retarded individuals, characterizing it as "cruel and unusual punishment." In a 6 to 3 decision, the Court ruled that "evolving standards of decency" now demonstrate a national consensus against executing those who are mentally deficient. In another important 2002 decision, *Ring v. Arizona*, the Supreme Court ruled that only juries, not judges, may impose the death penalty. In her majority opinion, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg noted that an individual's right to trial by jury "would be senselessly diminished if it encompassed the fact-finding necessary to increase a defendant's sentence by two years, but not the fact-finding necessary to put him to death."

2. Incompetent Counsel

Competent attorneys are not always affordable or available as defense counsel in capital cases. Defendant George McFarland, sentenced to death in 1992, had a lawyer who slept through most of his four-day trial. The Texas Supreme Court turned down his appeal because, in the words of the trial judge: "The Constitution says that everyone's entitled to an attorney of their choice. But the Constitution does not say that the lawyer has to be awake." McFarland's case was shocking, but not unique. In 1997, the Texas Court of Appeals turned down three petitions from death-row inmates whose lawyers slept through significant parts of their trials. This has resulted in many defendants receiving unfair and unequal trials. On June 12, 2000, Professor James Liebman of Columbia University Law School released a comprehensive study of the death penalty, which found that serious mistakes were made in two-thirds of capital cases. The most common errors were incompetent representation and prosecutorial misconduct.

3. Conviction of Innocents and DNA Testing

Since 1973, 102 people have been released from death row after evidence of their innocence emerged. Thirteen of those exonerated have been in Illinois. Many of the exonerated inmates were proven innocent through the work of investigative journalists using new scientific techniques – and not through the normal appeals process. Ten inmates have had their convictions overturned after DNA testing, yet most death row inmates do not currently have access to DNA tests. States and the judicial system have been reluctant to authorize such tests for old cases because of the high cost of tests, putting cost concerns above concern for potentially innocent life.

4. The Idea of Retribution

Supporters of the death penalty cite justice, punishment and the need for closure for victims as factors in their decision. In practice, the idea of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life" is not so simple. The threat of an execution almost always means a lengthy trial and years of appeals. Over forty percent of death penalty cases are turned back for reconsideration, while those who are executed spend an average of twelve years waiting to die on death row. As SeZann Bosler, the daughter of a murder victim and an anti-death penalty activist, said in an interview on the death penalty: "Clearly, the death penalty does not offer any immediate sense of resolution."

There is also an understanding among death penalty supporters that families of murder victims “need” to see the perpetrator end up on death row in order to feel closure. Murder Victim’s Families for Reconciliation, an organization of murder victim’s families who oppose the death penalty, debunk this idea, stating instead that healing happens in different ways for different people. Some families feel that an execution only adds to their pain and does not engender healing. As one mother replied at the funeral for her murdered son when asked if she wanted the death penalty for the murderer: “No, there’s been enough killing.”

5. Debunking the Myth of Deterrence

Contrary to what many death penalty supporters say, capital punishment is not an effective deterrent to crime. States that have death penalty laws do not have lower crime or murder rates than states without such laws. In one study comparing contiguous counties with similar socio-economic composition, but different death penalty policies, researchers found no deterring effect. They did find that counties with the death penalty had higher rates of violent crime (Keith Harries and Derral Cheatwood; Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD (1997)). In 1995, 386 randomly selected law enforcement officials ranked the death penalty last among seven potential ways to reduce crime, with 75% responding that they do not believe capital punishment helps to reduce crime.

6. Racial and Geographic Issues

In the landmark 1972 case *Furman v. Georgia*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Douglas wrote, “The discretion of judges and juries in imposing the death penalty enables prejudices against the accused if he is poor and despised, and lacking political clout, or if he is a member of a suspect and unpopular minority, and saving those who, by social position, may be in a more respected position.” Unfortunately, Justice Douglas’s insights still ring true.

Study after study illustrates the effects of race on the outcome of capital punishment cases, indicating that African-Americans receive the death penalty more frequently, particularly if the murder victim was white. Iowa University law professor David Baldus and statistician George Woodworth, along with colleagues in Philadelphia, have conducted a careful analysis of race and the death penalty in Philadelphia, which reveals that the odds of receiving a death sentence are nearly four times higher if the defendant is black. These results were obtained after analyzing and controlling for case differences such as the severity of the crime and the background of the defendant.

A second study by Professor Jeffrey Pokorak and researchers at St. Mary’s University Law School in Texas provides part of the explanation for why the application of the death penalty remains racially skewed. Their study found that the key decision makers in death penalty cases around the country are almost exclusively white men. Of the chief District Attorneys in counties using the death penalty in the United States, nearly 98% are white and only 1% are African-American.

A great disparity also exists with regards to the race of the victim. In Georgia’s Chattahoochee legal district, the district attorney has sought the death penalty in nearly 40 percent of the cases where the defendant was black and the victim was white, in 32 percent of the cases where both defendant and victim were white, in just 6 percent of the cases where both defendant and victim were black and never where the defendant was white and the victim black.

1959 CCAR Resolution: Opposing Capital Punishment

We believe it to be the task of the Jew to bring our great spiritual and ethical heritage to bear upon the moral problems of contemporary society. One such problem, which challenges all who seek to apply God's will in the affairs of men, is the practice of capital punishment. We believe that in the light of modern scientific knowledge and concepts of humanity, the resort to our continuation of capital punishment either by a state or by the national government is no longer morally justifiable.

We believe there is no crime for which the taking of human life by society is justified, and that it is the obligation of society to evolve other methods in dealing with crime. We pledge ourselves to join with like-minded Americans in trying to prevent crime by removal of its causes, and to foster modern methods of rehabilitation of the wrongdoer in the spirit of the Jewish tradition of tshuva (repentance).

We believe, further, that the practice of capital punishment serves no practical purpose. Experience in several states and nations has demonstrated that capital punishment is not effective as a deterrent to crime. Moreover, we believe that this practice debases our entire penal system and brutalizes the human spirit.

We appeal to our congregants and to our co-religionists, and to all who cherish God's mercy and love, to join in efforts to eliminate this practice, which lies as a stain upon civilization and our religious conscience.

The following are excerpts from the 1999 UAHC Resolution: Race and the U.S. Criminal Justice System

In 1959, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolved to oppose the death penalty, a position supported by the former Synagogue Council of America representing Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox rabbis. While we continue to work for the abolition of the death penalty, we cannot ignore injustices in its application. Statistical evidence, including that compiled by the Death Penalty Information Center, shows that African-American men are disproportionately represented among those on death row and those who have been executed in the last twenty years. Although people of color are the victims in more than half of all homicides, a White victim case is over four times more likely to result in a death sentence than a comparable Black victim case. Some contend that these and other statistics showing disparities can be explained by nondiscriminatory factors, but there is strong evidence that race is a determining factor. Studies also document the role of poverty in death penalty disparities. Many jurisdictions fail to provide adequate representation for indigents accused of capital crimes and adequate funding for those defending them to properly prepare their defenses. The American Bar Association in 1997 called for a moratorium in executions until each jurisdiction adopts policies and procedures to ensure that death penalty cases are administered fairly and impartially, in accordance with due process.

THEREFORE, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolves to:

1. Reaffirm its strong and long-standing opposition to the death penalty;
2. Call upon all branches of government, at the federal and state levels, until such time as the death penalty is abolished, to:
 - (A) Provide for the collection and analysis of data to determine the extent, if any, to which the disparate treatment of those sentenced to death is attributable to the race or ethnicity of the defendants or the victims and act to eliminate the disparities, where they exist.
 - (B) Reform the systems for the appointment of counsel for indigent defendants to ensure that all those accused of capital offenses are afforded competent counsel and that they have adequate funding to ensure that their defenses are fully investigated.
3. Call for a moratorium on the death penalty until all of the above matters are properly addressed...

1979 CCAR Resolution: Capital Punishment

In 1958 and again in 1960, the Central Conference of American Rabbis stated its opposition to all forms of capital punishment.

We reaffirm that position now. Nothing which we have observed during the intervening years has shaken our convictions that:

- a. Both in concept and in practice, Jewish tradition found capital punishment repugnant, despite Biblical sanctions for it. For the past 2,000 years, with the rarest of exceptions, Jewish courts have refused to punish criminals by depriving them of their lives.
- b. No evidence has been marshaled to indicate with any persuasiveness that capital punishment serves as a deterrent to crime.
- c. We oppose capital punishment under all circumstances.

Sources for Sermons, Study Material, and Reflection on the Death Penalty

Torah

The Torah clearly mandates the use of the death penalty for certain transgressions that it considers to be particularly egregious:

(To Noah after the flood): Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall his blood be shed. For in God's image did God make the human. (Genesis 9:6)

And to the Israelite people speak thus: Anyone who blasphemes God shall bear the guilt; if that person also pronounces the name Lord he shall be **put to death**. The whole community shall stone him; stranger or citizen, if he has thus pronounced the Name, he shall be **put to death**. If anyone kills any human being, he shall be **put to death**. One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it: life for life. If anyone maims his fellow, as he has done so shall it be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury he inflicted on another shall be inflicted on him. One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be **put to death**. You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike: for I the Lord am your God. (Leviticus 24:15-22) *See also, Exodus 21:12-17; 31:14; Leviticus 20:9-15; 24:15-22*

But the Torah also established certain safeguards to ensure that it would be a fair system:

A person shall be **put to death** only on the testimony of two or more witnesses; he must not be put to death on the testimony of a single witness. Let the hands of the witnesses be the first against him to put him to death, and the hands of the rest of the people thereafter. Thus you will sweep out evil from your midst. (Deuteronomy 17:6-7)

If a person appears before another to testify maliciously and gives false testimony against him, the two parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests, or magistrates in authority at the time, and the magistrates shall make a thorough investigation. If a person who testified is a false witness, if he testified falsely against his fellow, you shall do to him as he schemed to do to his fellow. Thus you will sweep out evil from your midst. (Deuteronomy 19:16-19)

Rabbinic Literature

The Talmud and rabbinic commentators expanded upon the limitations that the Torah imposed, rendering the number of instances in which the death penalty could be imposed to almost nil.

To death, not to exile or punishment. Why does it say “even from My very altar”? Because the Sanhedrin used to decide capital cases next to the Temple. If there is no Temple, there is no capital punishment. (Mechilta de’Rav Shimon b. Yochai on Ex. 21:14)

Life for life: Our rabbis differ in the matter, some say ‘an actual life’ while others say he shall pay with money, but not with actual life. For one who intends to kill this person and kills another person is free from the penalty of death and he pays to the victim’s heirs his value, as though he were sold in the market-place.

Eye for eye: If one blinded the eye of his fellow, he pays him the value of this eye, the equivalent of the decrease of his value if he were sold in the market-place; and similarly regarding all of them, but it does not mean the taking of an actual limb. (Rashi on Exodus 21:22-24)

The Sanhedrin that puts to death one person in seven years is termed tyrannical. Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah says, One person in seventy years. Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Akiba say, If we had been in the Sanhedrin, no one would have ever been put to death. Rabban Simeon ben Gemaliel says, They would have (thereby) increased the shedders of blood in Israel. (Mishnah Makkot 1:10)

Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the Sanhedrin abandoned its site by the Temple and moved to Hanuth. Did this have legal consequences? R. Nachman b. Isaac said, they ceased rulings of capital punishment. Why? Because the Sanhedrin saw that murderers were on the increase and they could not properly be judged, saying, it is better they be exiled from place to place than pronounced with the punishment... (B. Talmud Avodah Zara 8b)

How do they exhort witnesses testifying in capital cases? They brought them in and admonished them: Perhaps you will speak from supposition, and from hearsay, evidence from the mouth of a witness, or “We heard it from the mouth of a trustworthy person”; or, Perhaps you do not know that afterwards we will test you by inquiry and examination. Know that capital cases are not as monetary suits: Monetary suits – a person may give his property and effect atonement; capital cases – his blood and the blood of his offspring depend on him until the end of the world, for we find concerning Cain who killed his brother, it is written, “the bloods of your brother cry” (Gen. 4:10); it does not say, “your brother’s blood” but “bloods” – his blood and the blood of his offspring. Therefore man was created singly, to teach you that whoever destroys a single soul of Israel, Scripture accounts it as if he had destroyed a full world; and whoever saves one soul of Israel, Scripture accounts it as if he had saved a full world... (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5)

Our rabbis taught: the witness is asked, do you know him? Did you warn him? Did he acknowledge your warning? Did he admit his liability to death? (B.T. Sanhedrin 40b)

Modern Period

In modern times, almost every major Jewish organization has condemned the use of the death penalty:

Because of the supreme regard for the infinite value of human life in all but the most exceptional circumstances, a sentence of death was hedged by so many conditions that it could hardly be carried out in practice. (Sir Immanuel Jakobovits, Chief Rabbi of British Commonwealth)

All of the *amici* are opposed as a matter of principle to the imposition of the death penalty and support its abolition. Their position is based on their judgment as to the demands of contemporary American democratic standards, but also has its roots in the ancient Jewish tradition. (A “Friend of the Court Brief” by the Synagogue Council of America, a now-disbanded organization that was composed of the rabbinic and congregational arms of Conservative, Reform and Orthodox movements)

All of us have had our fill of senseless crime. Acts of violence demand our outrage and indignation, and we will make no excuses for those who have lost their reverence for human life. But in this case, as in so many others, we need to learn from Torah. Our tradition, predictably, is both hardheaded and sensible; it accepts the principle of the death penalty, but then imposes such stringent conditions on its application that it is virtually impossible to implement. Our rabbis appreciated that in this imperfect world of deceit and desire, systems of justice are inconsistent and arbitrary, falling short of the absolute integrity that God demands of us in such matters. (Rabbi Eric Yoffie, 1997 UAHC Dallas Biennial)

Capital punishment is an inhumane anachronism...Perhaps worst of all is what it does to society itself. Capital punishment not only seems futile in deterring crime; it is also a brutalization of the human spirit and an arrogation of the lifetaking power which inheres only in God. (*Albert Vorspan, former Senior Vice President of the UAHC and Director of the Commission on Social Action, co-author, Jewish Dimensions of Social Justice*)

Whereas the Torah teaches that all human beings are created in God’s image; Whereas Jewish tradition upholds the sanctity of life; Whereas both in concept and practice rabbinic leaders in many different historical periods have found capital punishment repugnant; Whereas no evidence has been marshaled to indicate with any persuasiveness that capital punishment serves as a deterrent to crime; Whereas legal studies have shown that as many as 300 people in this century have been wrongly convicted of capital crime; Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly oppose the adoption of death penalty laws and urge their abolition in states that have already adopted them. (Resolution of the Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative), adopted 1996)

Sample Bulletin Article for Death Penalty Program

The overwhelming majority of religious communities – including all branches of the Jewish Community – have long opposed the death penalty on moral grounds. This resolve has only been strengthened by evidence of injustice in the system. 107 men and women have been freed and exonerated from death row since 1973. Most of them spent years there, and some came within days of execution. In addition to concerns about innocence, there are very real racial and economic disparities inherent in our system of capital punishment. Almost all people sentenced to death are poor, and many had incompetent legal counsel. Racial minorities are over-represented on death row, and they are more likely to end up there if their victims were white.

The UAHC and the CCAR, both of which have resolutions supporting the abolition of capital punishment, have joined the growing moratorium movement, advocating a pause in executions while our broken system of capital punishment is examined. The Religious Action Center, the Washington office of the UAHC and the CCAR, is working in coalition with many other religious groups to urge a moratorium on executions at the state and federal level, with the eventual goal of national abolition.

When the stakes are this high – with human life hanging in the balance – we must be doubly certain before imposing a death sentence. Jewish tradition teaches that a wrongful execution, like any murder, is equivalent to destroying the whole world. The prophet Zechariah enjoins us: “See that justice is done.” It is our solemn

obligation not just to promote justice, but also to stand up and decry injustice when we witness it. We have a unique opportunity to do this in _____, by urging our state legislature to end the juvenile death penalty in our state. This would send an unambiguous signal to other states with the juvenile death penalty and to the Supreme Court that the juvenile death penalty is not morally acceptable.

In that spirit, our congregation will be...**[Insert paragraph about your program here]**

I hope that you will join us!

Program Ideas

- o Host a panel discussion—invite representatives from Murder Victim’s Families for Reconciliation, Amnesty International, and the local branch of the American Psychiatric Association;
- o Contact your state juvenile death penalty coalition and find out how you can get involved;
- o Lobby your governor to commute the sentences of juvenile offenders on your state death row;
- o Hold a “book club” discussion on Dead Man Walking by Sister Helen Prejean;
- o Publicize and attend local rallies and press conferences;
- o Plan a lobby visit to your state capital;
- o Hold a letter writing/phone call campaign; and
- o Give a sermon on the juvenile death penalty.

Resources

See **The Justice Project** website for up-to-date information on state legislative activity. To search by state, see <http://justice.policy.net/cjreform/state/> and to search by issue, see <http://justice.policy.net/cjreform/stateleg/>.

The **ACLU Capital Punishment Project** is actively involved in fighting the death penalty. Their website contains background information and resources for activists. Contact Josh Noble or Diann Rust-Tierney at 122 Maryland Ave NE Washington, DC 20002 (202) 675-2319 or check www.aclu.org/death-penalty for more information.

The **American Bar Association’s Juvenile Justice Project** has information on the juvenile death penalty with links to scientific information about brain development and statements of organizations opposed to the death penalty for juvenile offenders. Contact Adam Ortiz at (202) 662-1513 or email him at ortiza@staff.abanet.org more see <http://www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/resources.html> for more information.

The **National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty** is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to the abolition of capital punishment. It provides information, advocates for public policy and mobilizes and

supports people and institutions that share its unconditional rejection of the state's use of homicide as an instrument of social policy. Contact Sapna Mirchandani at 920 Pennsylvania Ave., SE Washington, DC 20003 (202) 543-9577 or check www.ncadp.org.

The **Death Penalty Information Center** is a wonderful source of statistical information and analysis. The Center prepares in-depth reports, issues press releases, conducts briefings for journalists and serves as a resource to those working on this issue. Check their website: www.deathpenaltyinfo.org for more information.

Murder Victim's Families for Reconciliation is a group of family members of murder and execution victims who believe that reconciliation is the way to end the cycle of violence. MVFR's ongoing projects include speaking tours and a Speaker's Bureau and publication of *The Voice* newsletter. They recently came out with a book, *Dignity Denied: The Experience of Murder Victims' Family Members Who Oppose the Death Penalty*. A speaker from this group would be an excellent asset to a panel. Contact them at: 2161 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02140 (617) 868-0007 or check <http://www.mvfr.org>.

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