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NATIONAL EXECUTION LIST

Date	Name	State	Date	Name	State
12/3/2004	Charles Walker	NC	2/17/2005	Dennis Bagwell	TX
1/4/2005	James Porter	TX	3/10/2005	Alexander Martinez	TX
1/20/2005	Jose Briseno	TX		- Volunteer	
1/26/2005	Michael Ross - Volunteer	CT	3/15/2005	Christopher Davis	TN
1/27/2005	George Jones	TX	4/12/2005	Robert Leach	TN

TEXAS EXECUTIONS BY YEAR AND NUMBER

1982..(1)	1983..(0)	1984..(3)	1985..(6)	1986..(10)	1987..(6)	1988..(3)	1989..(4)
1990..(4)	1991..(4)	1992..(12)	1993..(17)	1994..(15)	1995..(19)	1996..(3)	1997..(37)
1998..(20)	1999..(35)	2000..(40)	2001..(17)	2002..(33)	2003..(24)	2004..(23)	

State to State Updates

Supreme Court Justice Stevens Says U.S. "Better Off" Without Capital Punishment

During a "fireside chat" with fellow Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer and hundreds of lawyers and judges who practice in federal courts in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin, Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens stated, "I think this country would be much better off if we did not have capital punishment." Stevens noted that he believes the death penalty is constitutional, adding, "But I really think it's a very unfortunate part of our judicial system and I would feel much, much better if more states would really consider whether they think the benefits outweigh the very serious potential injustice, because in these cases the emotions are very, very high on both sides and to have stakes as high as you do in these cases, there is a special potential for error. We cannot ignore the fact that in recent years a disturbing number of inmates on death row have been exonerated." The "fireside chat" was part of the 7th Circuit Bar Association dinner in Chicago. Justice Stevens and Justices Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Sandra Day O'Connor have all voiced concerns about the death penalty in recent years, but this is perhaps one the most pronounced statements against capital punishment made

by a Supreme Court justice since the late Harry Blackmun, who wrote in 1994, "From this day forward, I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death." (*Chicago Sun Times*, May 12, 2004)

Texas Police Chief Calls for Halt to Executions in Wake of Scandal

In the wake of a scandal that has called into question the reliability of the police crime lab's testing and handling of evidence in Harris County, Texas, Police Chief Harold Hurtt has said that executions of inmates from the county should not be scheduled until all relevant evidence has been reexamined to assure accuracy. He went on to note that the executions of nine individuals convicted in Harris County that are scheduled to take place before March 2005 should not be allowed to go forward. "I think it would be very prudent for us as a criminal justice system to delay further executions until we have had time to review the evidence," Hurtt said. Harris County investigators are about a quarter of the way through their review of hundreds of boxes of evidence that had been forgotten in a storage room and may impact thousands of criminal cases. (*Houston Chronicle*, September 30, 2004).



THE WILLIAMS REPORT is a semi-monthly newsletter that addresses issues related to prison & death row, at times various political and cultural issues expressed by its contributors. Though content continues to grow, we always have interviews, at times art & poetry, essays, updates from states, and now have a new section called "Kid's Corner" to involve today's youth with sensitive subjects not found in our schools.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Though it seems we have lagged behind this past year that has not been the case. Though there have been less issues than the past several years, we are experiencing more growth and

interest. As the editor, I am always seeking help! It is at times difficult to delegate task from a cage (cell), so I am always interested in hearing from others with new ideas who can breathe new life into the newsletter with their own ideas and willingness to make this publication a success. That success is defined by the effort that's put forth. It starts with THE PEOPLE and will always remain with THE PEOPLE. When I use that term, it refers to the conscious-minded people who care about the world they live and become an active participant in the world in which they live; in which we live. I encourage anyone, anywhere, no matter race, age, gender, or nationality to become apart of *THE WILLIAMS REPORT* with the intent to not only give prisoner's a voice, but a voice of the oppressed anywhere. We have hopes to grow and that will happen with your support.

There is a new section called "Kids Corner". This is an attempt to involve our youths between the ages of 9 to 17 years old. We thus far will not place the last name of the kids who submit questions and letters to be published, unless they have written permission from their parents. If anyone wishes to contact the kids with replies, please contact the editor or the managerial editor.

We are now encouraging prisoners around the world to submit articles, art, poetry, interview each other, as well as activist/abolitionist. We do not specifically focus on individual cases, but it also does not mean we are limited to not do so. We just encourage submissions that elevate the consciousness of others and to make people pause to think for a brief moment. That can be done in so many ways.

Perhaps with this issue, it will be translated in French. We hope this will be a regular thing, dig. We are also seeking someone to translate each issue in Spanish, as well as other languages. We hope to further make this an international publication both with hard copies and electronically. Is it a task? Hell yes! But, we need help. Any contributions are greatly needed, fundraisers, and just a bridge to communicate to become further organized.

We are also looking for people who are willing to handle circulation, spread awareness about the newsletter, work with students, and extend a hand. If you contact anyone listed, a response will come! Until next issue, we must continue to embrace struggle so that dreams shape our realities. Power to the People

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(Juvenile Debate, from page 3)

act. He was not stabbed thirteen times, which was not possible due to the restraints. The guard was not seriously injured and the public never would know that this same prison guard is notorious for provoking incidents and the mistreatment of prisoners. One prisoner snapped but the media heightened the fear in the community and the general aura is that prisoners on death row arbitrarily go around stabbing guards countless times which makes it much easier for others to be executed without anyone ever batting an eye.

As we near October, I encourage people to discuss not just killing children, but the death penalty in itself. A little research goes a long way. We just can't be given morality. We learn it by not being afraid to learn facts, express empathy, and have understanding, otherwise vengeance and revenge wins. Vengeance and revenge criminalizes us all when we systematically kill. The juvenile debate is a necessary step, but more needs to be taken. What do we learn when we choose to eliminate a problem instead of dealing with it? When we systematically kill, who is responsible? Is it easier to collectively kill as long as it doesn't become personal to us? Was it easier for us to attack Iraq, until we personally lost loved ones and it affected us directly? Can we support anything without taking a closer look for ourselves? Journalism seems to do what is safe and popular, no what is true. At what point do we as a society take responsibility for what path we are headed. I am labeled as a killer. I am not a killer but I even face this society. The death penalty is but one example, but we can't just walk away. Lives are taken in our names whether we accept it or not. Blood is on our hands, even the blood of American children. What if the child was your son or daughter? What if that child was innocent? What if that kid was overcome by peer pressure and was guilty by association? Maybe, he was just afraid to say no! It happens and has happened... The juvenile debate is but one of many issues that tackles our morality as American people but challenges our humanity as human beings. If you could join organizations, sign petitions, write letters, or write prisoners, please do. We all have to start from somewhere. I started by challenging myself from this prison within a prison.

September 25, 2004

Nanon Williams
Texas Death Row

(Kids' Corner, from page 5)

CODY: Has this experience changed your life? For better or worse?

NICK: Although I've experienced and witnessed some negative things in my years of incarceration, I'd have to say that it's been mostly for the better for me as a person. The way I was living before being incarcerated was in a downward spiral. Here I've been forced to face myself, and discover both the good and the bad things about me. I've been fortunate in that I've had the inner-strength to face the negative things about myself in ways I hadn't before. It also forced me to look outwards to people in general and the world in particular. Like before, I'd watch the show "Roots" on television and learned things about slavery was one thing, but coming to prison and feeling -What slaves went through is another. It gave me a harsher glimpse of our country's brutality firsthand. We proclaim ourselves as "The Land of the Free" and "The Land of the Brave", but it still doesn't mean we don't have sadistic people "etc. History is not the fairytale we wish it to be. My life isn't the fairytale I wished it to be. As odd as it may sound, I'm thankful for this experience **because** made me look at myself, despite the circumstances.

LATRELLE: What three words describe your personality?

NICK: Stubborn. Independent. Driven.

LAURYN: If you were let out, would you keep doing crimes?

NICK: No I would not because I've learned to make better choices by taking the time to think before you act.

CODY: Do you think the majority of the people you meet in prison are the horrible monsters politicians and some people make them out to be?

(to be continued...)

(For those who wish to send emails to NICK, you can forward those letters to the editor via email and they will be given to him. Here's the email address, but we please ask that you get permission from your parents before contact: Nanon_Williams@yahoo.com. For kids who would like to send questions for "KID'S CORNER" please email those questions to the editor, or write

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STILL SURVIVING

By NANON McKEWN WILLIAMS

Nanon Williams reveals what Americans would love to ignore, that torture exists in the United States in the 21st century. This book shows the extremes to which the 8th Amendment to the Constitution is systematically violated. On Texas' death row, punishment is "cruel and unusual," day after day, night after night.

Reading this book brings that reality into our consciousness, and hopefully calls upon our sense of responsibility and gives the phrase, "you can measure the maturity of a society by how they treat their prisoners," a face.



This is an important book about a topic of national debate, the Death Penalty. Williams gives a human face to the people cast out by society and condemned to execution by the State of Texas and reveals the inhuman face of our jailers. No American can take any pride in the way we pursue vengeance against society's prisoners.

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MURDER ONE

By Gabriel Gonzalez

Murder. That seems to be the centerpiece that my life revolves around. Death Row is my place of current confinement. I'm imprisoned in a 6 by 9 corner of this slaughterhouse, forced to witness the torturous prelude to the execution of the people around me. I'm here, sentenced to die, but that isn't as simplistic and swift as it may sound. The thought of death, the constant flow of death, living alone in this monotonous lifestyle of Death Row, combines to make a lethal daily dose of mental and emotional deterioration.

I am dying in here; a part of me is dying every day. Actually, that is faring well by comparison to some of the other men here. Maybe it's that I'm still young and considerably stubborn. Or maybe it's the fear that runs through me when I witness men slowly slip into different stages of dementia. I can honestly say that I do not fear dying, but I do fear losing all sense of myself as a human being. When a man mops his cell down with feces or urinates on the floor, as if to mark his territory like an animal, his human self is no longer intact. Furthermore, he is no longer a part of society - not even of prison society. He is merely subsisting on the peripheral edge of everyone else's consciousness. In other words, no one gives a damn about him. It is the indiscriminate rapidity in which this craziness strikes that I fear the most.

The building atmosphere that Death Row prisoners are housed in is seemingly designed to drive us out of our minds. It is as if the prison administrators are deliberately driving men insane so that they match the sensationalized death row image that represents them in the administrator's minds. Perhaps they believe that it is easier to kill a man thought to be crazy, over one who is still coherent and desperate to remain alive. I do not know, but that appears to be the theme here.

There are no televisions, or craft programs; there is no work program, and prisoners are locked in their cells 23 hours out of each day. From the moment they come here, until the day their remains are wheeled out, visitation, mail, showers, and one hour, single man recreation are the only exceptions. Recreation consists of one hour alone, in a cage slightly larger than the one we are forced to live in. Every day living here is a constant struggle to maintain the desire to live. Many men are finally eager to go down to the executioner. Their constitution has been murdered. Their strength has been murdered. Their desire for living has been murdered. What is there left, to sustain life? That is a question I hope that I never have to ask myself.

For now, I know that I have much to live for, but sometimes, the constant killing of men around me makes all that I have in life seem mediocre compared to all that I have to live with.

Gabriel Gonzalez
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To Kill or Not to Kill: The Juvenile Debate By Nanon Williams

Struggle occurs every second, every minute, every hour of every day life. While some countries struggle for food, fight fatal diseases, attempt to maintain shelter, gain independence from imperialistic greed, or just struggle to be free as a people and nation; America is struggling for morality. When you dominate the world and fill the treasure chest beyond capacity, does the struggle for morality become a luxury? As we near October, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear the case of Christopher Simmons, which will decide the fate of death row juveniles around the country. To kill, or not to kill is the question? Do we spare the lives of our children who have committed murderous acts, or in the name of justice do we allow state-sanctioned killings as a deterrent to killing? Statistics and research show that the death penalty does not deter crime. In fact, in certain parts of the country, where the death penalty is prevalent, crime has increased.

I can claim to give my words credibility, as I was once a kid sentenced to death by the state of Texas. I could argue points that could surely make people pause and think, but then again, I see but a small window to the world. It is difficult for anyone to see a window into this world in which I live. This world is ruled by chaos, insanity, destruction and death.

Most see a small version on television from the comfort of a couch, while others read the watered-down version from a newspaper. But few Americans have experienced it first hand. For the last thirteen years, I've known nothing less. It is what I have breathed and lived almost have of my life. At times I feel like I am alive in a huge graveyard waiting to be thrown in a casket. It is with these thoughts that I digress. To tell anyone about the *mauldiness* of death row would read like a horror novel.

A commonality that every person can share is the fact that we were once all children, doing things that children do. We became adolescents

who took risk because it was the cool thing to do and never thought about the outcome until later. We were impulsive and peer pressure took the place of our developing senses. Teenagers who held a lack of moral culpability until after the fact and who would say "I'm sorry" as quickly as the words could form in their mind. How many kids did something they were so ashamed of they never told anyone, even when they became adults? Whatever actions a kid takes, whether good, bad, or indifferent it does not alter the fact that the action was operating from the mindset of a child.

Professors, district attorneys, judges, or organizations of various kinds may critique this writing but I have little formal education. At seventeen, I didn't get the chance to earn my high school diploma or fulfill my dreams of going to college and ultimately playing professional football. Instead of going to Penn State, I ended up at the state pen. I got an authenticated certificate to hell and death. Credibility? I have none. In the eyes of society, I am a criminal. Personally, I am not writing in an effort to save my life as an innocent child sentenced to death. My quest is entirely different. I am fighting for my right to be free and not rot in a cage for the balance of my life. My quest is for justice, but what is it? Is it the systematic killing of human beings?

When I first came to death row, I was scared to death. By law I wasn't old enough to vote, sign my school report card, or frequent rated PG movies without the consent of a legal guardian, however, I was old enough to be killed by the state of Texas. The idea of being on death row didn't hit me until I got here. When I first stepped foot in this death camp, it dawned on me that every day until I took my last breath, would be a day that I would wake up around over 400 condemned men. All of them grown, with the exception of a few. I bonded with the juveniles. We tried to cloak our fears by draping ourselves with tattoo's that acted like a shield of armor to appear as a convict. We would remain silent while we listened to men talk about their kids, house, wives, and the things they did and had in the free world. We pretended to be tough because we could not relate. No one wanted to hear us talk about high school, girls our age, and sibling quarrels. We were children who lacked commonality with the other labeled criminals. It was akin to throwing a cub into a cage full of hungry lions. We didn't have mom or dad to crawl to for help. Over the years many of the kids were brutally raped, some commit-

KID'S CORNER

KID'S CORNER IS A NEW SECTION OF THE NEWSLETTER THAT IS AN ATTEMPT TO GET TODAY'S YOUTH ACTIVE IN NEW AREAS THAT AFFECT OUR SOCIETY THESE QUESTIONS BY THE KID'S ARE RELAYED TO THE PRISONERS BY THE EDITOR OF THIS PUBLICATION. IN THIS ISSUE, WE HAVE QUESTIONS BY 9-YEAR OLD LAURYN FROM LOS ANGELES, 15-YEAR OLD LATRELL FROM LIVINGSTON, AND 15-YEAR OLD CODY FROM HOUSTON.)



KID'S CORNER (EDITOR): Please introduce yourself to the kid's and tell them basic things; like your age, how long you've been incarcerated, where your grew up, etc.

JOSEPH NICHOLS-BEY: I'm now 43 years old and have been locked up since I was 19 years old. So, I've been locked up for 24 years. I'm from Houston, which is in Harris County. I was married while I was in high school and am the father of one daughter. I never finished school; I dropped out a couple of months before I finished which was a huge mistake on my part.

KID'S CORNER: Thanks for the intro! I won't ask you many questions as the kids have plenty, but you were almost a kid yourself when you came to death row. In fact, you were only 'our years older than two of the kids asking you questions. Twenty-four years is a long time ... Now you know they say "out of the mouth of babes..." comes truth, so their questions will be direct. I'm glad it's you and not me! <smile> How would you like to be addressed?

JOSEPH NICHOLS BEY: Just call me "Nick".

KID'S CORNER: Alright Nick, basically I'll just be relaying the questions by the kids so just address them according to who ask the question. I will mix them up and not ask them in any particular order. Good luck to you 'cause you gone need it!

NICK: Man, come on with the questions!

LAURYN (9 YEARS OLD): What caused you to be in jail?

NICK: I'm in jail because I made some bad choices and also hung around other people who made bad choices. I



ted suicide, joined gangs for protection, became prostitutes, and some fought back. I fought back and have scars that run across my body like a road map from my effort. Every time I fought back, I was punished. I never won and there was never a victory to be found. I lived for another day. Now, like so many other kids, some grow up to become men only to be executed. Society has its justice.

I've watched some of those kids take years to stare reality straight in the face and eventually grow up. Truth is, some of the best men I ever knew were once kids on death row. I think of Napoleon Beazley. I remember him constantly reading, and being a loner. He was always to himself and often times scared. I watched a boy grow into a man who loved God, spoke positive encouraging words to fellow men, and could even smile when there was no reason. If ever there were a perfect example of a model prisoner, it would be him.

I think of Emerson Rudd, who was only 18 years old when he came to death row. He was young and defiant and we would rise up against the brutality and injustices dealt to us. We called ourselves fighting back against this brutal system in every way, even if it meant being physically hurt. We both grew up. We read to each other, found people in history books that became our source of inspiration and strength. Emerson became a leader amongst men. He died recognizing that struggles exist around the world more than his own. I think about Gary Graham. By the time I got to death row, he was emerging as Shaka Sankofa ("return and fetch it"), a chosen African name that means to "fight back." The kid in him was just that, a kid but that kid grew into a man that became a conscious active symbol who recognized that racism and injustice was alive and embedded in our system. He offered us hope. Hope that his life would not be a wasted sacrifice. Why do I use the term sacrifice? I use it because he became a political prisoner. He became aware of the political nature of his incarceration and became a voice. A voice that became an act of defiance to the powers that be. It perhaps killed him more than anything else. All of them, Napoleon, Emerson, and Shaka were kids who changed. If kids don't change, who does? I could name so many. Who can't think of a kid in their neighborhood who was destined for prison, but changed and became ministers, leaders, teachers, lawyers, doctors and CEO's of billion dollar companies.

What inspired me to write some of my books was another book called "A Lesson before Dying" by Earnest J. Gaines. Although it

is about a boy sentenced to death, it doesn't capture death row as it exists today. I would recommend everyone to read this book. In the book, his lawyer and the jury compare the boy to a hog, in other words an animal. I know that feeling first hand. My prosecutor never said a single word to me, had never heard my voice but pointed at me in the courtroom and said, "He's a predator. He's evil, He's just flat-out evil!" The boy in the book was basically told he was an animal and decided he would act like one. They said he was a hog, so he sounded like one at times, ate like one, and pretended to be like one. When kids are treated a certain way, they adapt to their environments. The one passage that I've never forgotten is when the author writes: "Do you know what a hero is? A hero is someone who does something for other people. He does something other men don't and can't do." I thought about that statement. I could never be a hero. I was judged to be something that I'm not, a killer. Gaines writes: "Those out there are no better than you are. They are worse. That's why they are always looking for a scapegoat, someone else to blame. I want you to show the difference between what they think you are and can be. To them, you are nothing but a nigger, no dignity, no heart, and no love for your people. You can prove them wrong." This statement brought tears to my eyes because I was the little boy in the book. I was living the life of the novel, but my reality was far, far worse than the book. I accepted the challenge to prove this system wrong and to prove that I wasn't an animal. I would prove that I wouldn't always be the young kid that they judged, but I would become a man that stood up against that judgment with strong character. Kids can do that and people can do that but death erases all of those chances.

I had no intentions of making this a personal testament, and could argue against killing as a whole. I see the juvenile debate as an attempt for a political makeover to repair Americas' image in the eyes of the international community. I hope that juveniles on death row lives are spared, but it won't solve the problems that exist concerning capital punishment. Indigent, disadvantaged, and minorities are still being sent to the execution chamber at an alarming rate. Sadly, the majority of juveniles that have been executed in Texas were minorities. The media often times will use every chance to justify why Americans should continue with the killing machine. A few weeks ago, a handcuffed prisoner stabbed a guard near the throat. The local newspaper reported that he was stabbed thirteen times to over exemplify the

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was not strong enough to say "NO!" and stay away from things I knew were wrong. Sometimes we have to be smart enough and strong enough to do what is right, even when it's hard. Making good decisions are important and bad ones can affect us for the rest of our lives and those we love.

LATRELLE (15 YEARS OLD): What was your childhood dream?

NICK: My earliest dream was to play football in college and I almost achieved that, but I became a father while in high school, got married, so I ended up quitting school and my dreams were deferred. That was a huge mistake! I should have stayed in school and would encourage you to stay in school no matter what happens during this time.

CODY (15 YEARS OLD): Was prison what you expected it to be?

NICK: First, I'd like to say that my experiences have been death row only.. I've never done time in general population limited to and there is difference. In some ways things were as I expected them to be and in others, not so. Death row isn't anywhere as violent and chaotic as one would lead you to believe, especially considering the fact that we've been labeled as a "threat'..' " to society. I came to death row thinking that I had to prove myself to others, yet it's never been that way. Most of the disruptions (or violent acts) experienced here are by the actions of the administration and guards. Most personnel see our conditions as apart of their job to make things and life here as hard as possible for anyone here. They feel like they have to exact further measure and punishment upon those here that has not been imposed by the court. Here we face oppression, sensory deprivation, physical and mental deprivation... The answer to your question would be yes and no. No it is not what I expected it to be, and yes in some ways worse than what_ I thought it would be.

LAURYN: Have you made any friends yet?

NICK: Yes, I have made some friends here and some have helped me to become a better person. Friendship is a bond that offers so very much...

CODY: How do you feel about animal rights? (I ask this because animals raised for food undergo much of the same torture and psychological abuse as people in prison.)

NICK: An interesting question Cody. Most people would be tempted to make a separation between the treatment of animals and human beings, but I think they are tied together. The people who have strong feelings about animal rights are those who tend to have more compassion towards other human beings. The treat-

ment of animals says a lot about a person and the society in which we live. Yet, although I am for animal rights, I think we first need to become more focused and committed on human rights, then those of animal rights will get better.

LATRELLE: What is the most overemphasized about death row?

NICK: The exaggerated misconception that everyone on death row are animals not deserving of any compassion. Even more so, that everyone here is actually guilty of killing someone when there are many here who have killed no one.

LAURYN: Do you think you should not be in jail?

NICK: No, not if the price to pay is my life. There should be a price for us to pay when we make mistakes, but as human beings, we have the ability to learn and to become better people. We should show people forgiveness, not just punish them.

LATRELLE: If you could change one thing about Texas death row, what would it be and why?

NICK: If it were up to me, there would be no more Texas death row. I would take it away because you cannot teach society that it is wrong to take a persons life by creating laws that allow you to kill someone in return. There is nothing you can change about death row that would make it a "better place". This is a place where people are sent to be killed. That alone will forever make it a horrible place.

CODY: Do you see more apathy or resilience in people in prison?

NICK: I see more apathy because prison is more-so a place of punishment than one where a great deal of effort is placed to actually make someone a better person with an intent. Some people who are faced with various challenges learn something about themselves along the way and death row prisoners are no different because people-are-people, no matter where they are. More often than not, we do work against our own best interest because the powers-that-be designs it to be so.

LAURYN: Do you like the discipline in jail?

NICK: No one likes discipline Lauryn, but discipline is good for us. It helps us to become better people and it also makes us strong inside. When your parents exercise discipline on you, it is actually for you. To make you better. To make you think, but there is no discipline here. It is only punishment. Here, they punish you to make you feel bad and to cause you pain, not make you a better person. If it was to make us a better person, why would they kill us?

(Kids' Corner, cont on page 11)

A MAN'S VALUE IS NOT DETERMINED BY A PRISON CELL

By Jovan McClenton

It is amazing to find how an adverse situation can bring out the best in a person, revealing a strength and resolve that they did not know that they possessed. Never in a million years would I have thought that I could survive in my present circumstances, living caged in a prison cell.

A few years ago, here in the prison, I attended meetings of, "Narcotics Anonymous." As I listened to the brothers talk about their various problems with drug addiction, I became uncomfortable with the fact that all the comments tended to be highly negative. They spoke as though they were completely helpless and hopeless, slaves to their body's appetites. I compared that to my own feelings, my desire to overcome my past mistakes, to bring some closure to those painful memories and to satisfy my desire to achieve new goals for myself.

With these thoughts in mind, I raised my hand to speak. I felt much trepidation, would I be able to express what was on my mind, would the brothers want to listen to me? Finally, I took a deep breath and began. The words seemed to flow more easily than I had expected. I told them, "We are not slaves to any impulses or urges, we simply need to make the commitment to what we want, to say it and do it, and it shall be done. Our problem is in the way we think about ourselves. If there is confusion in our minds, that causes the confusion in our lives. We can correct the confused thinking by becoming more conscious of ourselves and our real needs and developing our mental faculties to improve our knowledge of life. We can turn our lives around with a positive attitude."

As I spoke, I was moved by the awareness that the brothers were listening closely to what I had to say. I have never before experienced such gratification from expressing my thoughts. It gave me a feeling of self-worth, an emotional satisfaction and a sense of brotherhood with men of various races and backgrounds. After the meeting, the instructor walked up to me and shook my hand. He told me that in his 20 years conducting these meetings, he had never heard anyone speak so eloquently and inspiringly. We exchanged smiles and thanks and went our separate ways.

The Narcotics Anonymous classes have since been canceled for lack of funding but the lessons I learned there remain with me. Intelligence is a phenomenon of our existence. Our minds need nurturing and as that occurs, our character begins to change, our past is wiped

out. Like the Phoenix, it has been set on fire and our soul arises, renewed from the ashes.

I will never forget that day, for that is when I knew that I would no longer be defined by my past. My value as a man would not be determined by my past. If a prison cell is where I must live, then that is where I will be renewed and come to be valued for my intelligence and wisdom, liberated from the psychological chains that bound me. A man's value is not determined by prison cell.

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Justice Is Only a Word Richard Michael Rossi

In America, we live in a society that proclaims "with liberty and justice for all." Justice means the administration of just behavior or treatment for everyone. When we do not live up to such lofty goals and standards, our words become hollow and meaningless. Either we believe in justice for all and do everything possible to safeguard it, or we abdicate our responsibility. And that is exactly what has occurred today, an abandonment by the United States Supreme Court in their decision to deny some 100 death row prisoners retroactivity in their appeals to be sentenced by a jury.

In the Ring case in 2002, this same court decided that it was unconstitutional to allow a judge rather than a jury to determine the sentence in a death penalty case. During the oral arguments in the Summerlin case, Justice Stephen Breyer was concerned about "the spectacle of a man going to his death having been sentenced in violation of that principle." Now we know that the majority of the justices did not agree with him.

Experts such as Dale Baich, an assistant federal public defender, have stated that it is simply a matter of fairness. "It is not fair to allow some individuals facing the death penalty to be afforded the constitutional right to a jury trial and deny the same guarantee to others who are also under a sentence of death."

In deciding the principle of jury sentencing, the Supreme Court overturned the previous improper law (Walton) that allowed judges to impose the death penalty. That change came too late for all of those who were executed and who were sentenced by judges, but common sense would dictate that if it was wrong and is wrong for a judge to have given the death sentence, then all those who were so sentenced should be allowed to have this mistake corrected by resentencing. But as we see, the law is

not always as logical and fair as we would like to believe.

This decision is final and so all the death penalty cases that were put on hold pending this decision from the Supreme Court will now continue on their path to a speedy resolution. And for most, that resolution is the final solution of death. Many hopes have been dashed, and once again the words ring hollow in a society that proclaims 'justice for all.' But we on the row only see justice when it is convenient. Justice is just a word that depends on who is defining it. To say that the only people who lost today are the approximately 100 death row prisoners is to ignore the proposition that justice denied to one is justice denied to all. It is a sad day for everyone.

One of the key elements in this case was the theory as presented in Ring, that a collective decision by a jury of 12 members of the community is far superior to the decision of one judge. After all, a judge is a human being subject to personal problems, and addictions just as any other person. In Summerlin's case, Judge Marquardt was indeed a damaged individual. After twice being convicted of drug possession, during his disbarment hearing he admitted to having had a 16 year addiction to drugs while on the bench. In that time he sentenced Warren Summerlin and me to death. The Canons of Judicial Ethics guards against any exhibit of the slightest hint of impropriety, actual or perceived. Such a judge cannot pass judgment on another. But before being disbarred Judge Marquardt did, and while under the influence of marijuana.

Today, the United States Supreme Court, in essence, said that this doesn't matter. Justice will be meted out only to the new cases. Thus expediency wins the day and justice becomes a victim once again of unfulfilled dreams and promises. Justice is only a word.

Death Row, June 24, 2004. ©
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TWISTED TRUTH

"I do not mind being killed but I want the family of the victim and the world to know the truth"

This is one of Richard's many similar statements that made me write "TWISTED TRUTH" now available in the USA.

TWISTED TRUTH is the true story of the struggle for justice of an innocent young man,

who was condemned to death and finally executed by the State of Texas with the consent of the former Governor of Texas, George W. Bush.

The book can be ordered from any bookshop or from www.amazon.co.uk or www.amazon.com. ISBN number: 1-84401-148-8, Publisher: ATHENA PRESS London Distributor: Gardeners

After you read the book, please hand it on; I want Richard's wish to become true.

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Review by Pen Press London

"On 22nd August 2000, Richard Wayne Jones's life was snuffed out on a gurney in Huntsville, Texas. It was another State execution. He'd been on death row for fourteen years. Quick and fair? Not in the current US legal climate, and certainly not in the post-conviction review system prevailing in Texas today.

The author exchanged letters with the condemned man, then met him, and so began a long and deep friendship between them which accompanied the struggle for justice that Wendy, her husband, her friends and lawyers embarked upon. The brutal closure of it all has prompted this searching and at times harrowing denunciation of the legal morass surrounding judicial murder in the USA. Richard's letters, many of which are reproduced here, are touching. His story, told in forthright and convincing terms, will make you think again about the *lex talionis* - demanding a life for a life.

'Schmid-Eastwood tells a story that had to be told. this book absolutely bangs it home. It is a document both of humanity and inhumanity; a document of record. I am certainly no analyst of evidence; but I am certain that Richard was innocent, and I defy anybody, after reading this book, to sleep any easier.'

'...an indictment of the cruelty of capital punishment, informed by first hand experience The book has been excellently structured, starting with Richard's early life, then moving to details of the Livingstone murder /his supposed crime), his apprehension, trial and sentencing. The relentless to-and-froing of appeals is well documented, adding weight to the author's condemnation of the cat-and-mouse structure of the US capital system. In passages of the book that could have ended up cloying (e.g. the execution scene in particular) the author manages to avoid sentimentality by writing in this down to earth manner. A poignant story, well told.