

CCV Year-End News 2010

December 2010

california
Crime Victims
for **Alternatives**
to the Death Penalty

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State's rush to resume executions: An emotional rollercoaster for victims

Earlier this year, Californians watched as the state pushed forward in an effort to carry out its first execution in nearly five years. After a furious legal battle and several delays, the execution was scheduled for 9pm on Thursday, September 30, just three hours before the state's only supply of a key drug used in lethal injection expired.

The state's efforts finally collapsed when the state Supreme Court refused to change long-established appeals deadlines to allow the execution of Albert Greenwood Brown Jr. to go forward. Just hours after the decision, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation called off the execution.

Yet legal experts had predicted for weeks that the execution would not occur due to the many remaining legal challenges and uncertainties regarding the state's method of execution, lethal injection. "It is not surprising the courts finally halted the execution from proceeding, given the numerous pending legal questions," said Natasha Minsker, Death Penalty Policy Director for the ACLU of Northern California. "What is surprising is that the state moved forward with requesting execution dates when so many uncertainties remained."

Planning and then canceling an execution puts the victim's family on an emotional rollercoaster that makes the whole process significantly more difficult. It reopens the wounds and causes even more pain. By ignoring the negative impact of setting an unrealistic execution date, the needs of the victim's families are also ignored.

"Our sympathies go out to the family of Susan Jordan who was killed by Albert Brown nearly 30 years ago," said Aqeela Sherrills, the father of a murder victim and outreach coordinator for California Crime Victims for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. "They have been on a cruel legal rollercoaster for decades. We cannot imagine what the events of the last few weeks have been like for them."

"Victims' families are not prepared to handle a murder, and most are never supported adequately in the aftermath," Sherrills said. "The focus should be on providing victims with resources to cope with their loss rather than re-victimizing them for decades to come."



Whether a date is set or not, the prisoners will remain on death row, so rushing to set a date that will probably not be carried out is not only pointless, but irresponsible and a waste of taxpayer dollars.

"This is just another example of why California's dysfunctional death penalty system should be replaced with life without possibility of parole with work and restitution to the victims," said Lance Lindsey, Executive Director of Death Penalty Focus. "Life without possibility of parole is swift and certain punishment. By replacing the death penalty with life without possibility of parole, we would save the families of murder victims from this painful legal rollercoaster ride. And the state will save \$1 billion in five years and avoid legal chaos like this."

(Right)

The Death Penalty: Why We Should End it and How

July 7, 2010

Richmond Public Library



Judy Kerr
Richmond
07 July 2010
© Alex Madonik

“Watching You Hold Your Hatred” By Alice Walker

Watching you
hold
your
hatred
for such a long time
I wonder:
Isn't it
slippery?
Might you
not
someday
drop it
on
yourself?

I wonder:
Where does it sleep
if ever?

And where
do
you deposit
it
while you
feed
your
children
or
sit
in the
lap
of
the one
who
cherishes
you?

There is no
graceful
way
to
carry
hatred.

While
hidden
it is
everywhere.

From Hard Times Require
Furious Dancing

Darryl Stallworth, Ed Holleman, Aqeela Sherrills
Contra Costa College - 16 Nov 2010 © Alex Madonik



(Above and Right)

Taxed to Death: A Community Forum

November 16, 2010

Contra Costa College



Aqeela Sherrills - 16 Nov 2010 © Alex Madonik

Parallel Justice:

An interview with Susan Herman

As survivors of the victims of the most violent crimes, murder victim family members have the most direct and personal contact with the criminal justice system. We witness, firsthand, the successes and failures of the criminal justice system in meeting crime victims' needs. In California, we are seeing a sustained decrease in funding for victims' services. At the same time, hundreds of millions of dollars are being funneled into California's death penalty. We are in desperate need of new approaches and policy.

While there has been progress the past few decades in recognizing and working to meet crime victims' needs, there is still an appalling lack of services. As many CCV supporters can attest, our inadequate system of care often leaves murder victim family members without resources or support.

In her new book, [Parallel Justice for Victims of Crime](#), Susan Herman, Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Pace University, describes a simple, but revolutionary, approach to crime victims' needs. During a recent trip to San Francisco, Ms. Herman sat down with Judy Kerr to talk about her new book and the principles of Parallel Justice.

JK: Tell us how you got started in working with crime victims.

SH: I have worked with victims of crime in a number of ways. Before going to law school, I taught self-defense to rape crisis counselors, most of whom had also been victims of sexual assault. It was there that I really felt the personal and wide-ranging nature of the impact of violence on individuals. Later, I worked on the policy level as special counsel to the police commissioner in the NYPD. I managed all the programs for battered women and children at what was then called Victim Services, now Safe Horizon, and then was fortunate to serve as the Executive Director of the National Center. As you know, at the National Center, we advocated on behalf of victims of any kind of crime.

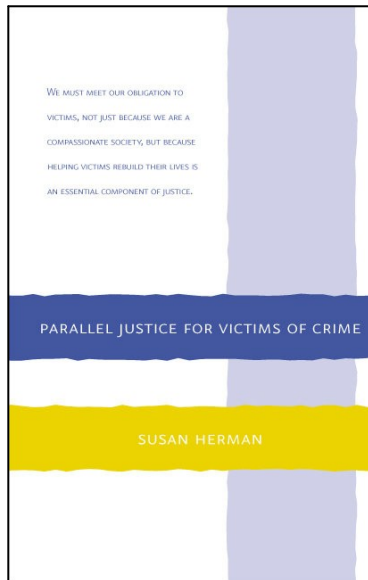
JK: Have you seen policies improve over the years? Do you agree that we still have much work ahead to meet the needs of violent crime?

SH: Yes to both! In the past 30 years, since I started in the victims' movement, I have seen increasing recognition of the impact of violent crime. Police, prosecutors, and healthcare workers are all being trained to react to victims more appropriately and, therefore, more effectively. We need to work towards a societal response to victims that is situated in a justice framework. In other words, we need to understand helping victims rebuild their lives as an essential component of justice, not just something we do as charity or because we are compassionate. Victim impact statements have, quite unintentionally, become the one place where victims' voices are heard. Crime victims need emergency assistance, practical resources, and sustained services whether or not a criminal is ever apprehended. We can do better than this.

JK: What are the main principles of parallel justice?

SH: The book outlines 10 primary principles of justice for victims. Briefly they are:

- Justice requires helping victims of crime rebuild their lives
- All victims deserve justice
- Victims should be presumed to be credible unless there is reason to believe otherwise
- Victims' safety is a top priority
- Victims should experience no further harm
- Rights should be implemented and enforced
- Victims should be allowed an opportunity to talk about their experiences and their needs
- Victims should be told that what happened to them was wrong and that every effort will be made to help them rebuild their lives
- Victims' needs should be addressed through a comprehensive, coordinated, communal response
- Decisions about how to address victims' needs should be based on sound information and research



JK: Can you think of any programs in California that use these principles?

SH: Yes. Jim Bueermann is a visionary Chief of Police in Redlands, California who has worked to implement many of these principles in his community. There are other efforts underway in other communities. Based on the reactions I get when I talk to service providers and law enforcement officials, I think we will see these ideas adopted and incorporated into a variety programs. Parallel Justice won't look the same everywhere. I'm pleased to say that the book is chock full of examples of Parallel Justice on the ground across the country.

JK: What is one thing that you would like to see a group like CCV do to support the principles you suggest in your book?

SH: Policy makers "don't get" the extent of victimization and the impact it has on individuals and communities. Groups like CCV can include the experience of victimization in their messaging. Personal stories are very powerful. If we are going to change the paradigm so that the idea of justice always includes helping crime victims rebuild their lives, we need crime victims who can explain the impact of victimization. How did it change their lives, not just emotionally, but physically, financially, and in very practical terms? What services or resources did they need at the time, what assistance did they receive, and what needs were never met?

And if CCV would like to create a Parallel Justice initiative, I'd be happy to help in any way I can.

Information about Parallel Justice is available at www.paralleljustice.org

**CALIFORNIA CRIME VICTIMS FOR
ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY**

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california
Crime Victims
for **Alternatives**
to the Death Penalty

www.CaliforniaCrimeVictims.org

California Crime Victims for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is a coalition of families, friends, and loved ones of murder victims who oppose the death penalty. The coalition supports families, friends, and loved ones in telling their stories and being heard. CCV educates the public about alternatives to the death penalty and provides information regarding resources and support to families regardless of their views on the death penalty or whether the perpetrator has been apprehended.

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Resources, Upcoming Events, and Ways to Get Involved!

Resources

Please visit www.californiacrimevictims.org/resources.html to find a list of government and non-government programs that provide support and resources for victims. Call 415.262.0082 to request a copy.

COPE Support Group

Meets every 2nd & 4th Saturday, 3-5pm at Regeneration, 219 E. 15th St., Oakland, CA. More info: 510.581.0100 / mothers1000@aol.com / www.1000mothers.org

Upcoming Event

NCADP Annual Conference: Training for the Long Run and Building Momentum for Repeal

January 13 –16, 2011 in Chicago, IL
Join human rights leaders, citizen activist volunteers, families of murder victims and death row prisoners, attorneys, law enforcement, and crime prevention professionals who support repeal of the death penalty in the United States. NCADP's 2011 Annual Conference will provide the range and depth of peer conversations, training, and networking you need to enhance your skills and expand your resource network. Please visit www.ncadp.org for more info.

Stay Connected!

Follow CCV on Twitter: www.twitter.com/CalCrimeVictims

“Like” CCV on Facebook: www.facebook.com/californiacrimevictims

Get involved on a local level by joining a county coalition!

Alameda County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (ACCADP)

Meetings are held on the 1st Thursday of each month, 5:30-7:30pm at 1000 Broadway, 5th Floor in Downtown Oakland. Please check the website to confirm date.
www.alamedadeathpenalty.org

Los Angeles County Coalition for Death Penalty Alternatives (LACCDPA)

Meetings are held on the 2nd Sunday of each month, 3pm at the ACLU of Southern California, 1313 West Eighth St. in Los Angeles. Please check the website to confirm date.
www.enddeathpenaltyla.org

Santa Clara County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (SCCCADP)

For more information, please visit:
www.santaclaraagainstddeathpenalty.org

Taxed to Death Coalition in San Diego County

For more information, please visit www.taxed2death.org