

# CCV Year-End News 2008

December 15, 2008

### *Special points of interest:*

- An end of the year recap of CCV members' activism
- Ways to get involved on a local level!

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## **Honoring CCV Members' Activism: A Message from Judy Kerr**

It has been just over one year since I became the spokesperson and outreach coordinator for California Crime Victims for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. My brother Bob was murdered in 2003 and, while I still wait for someone to be charged in my brother's murder, my opposition to the death penalty has grown stronger with everything I have learned and with each person I have met this year.

I have had the privilege to meet other murder victim family members whose reasons for opposing the death penalty vary, but whose convictions against capital punishment are absolute. They are an inspiration to me. I would like to share with you just some of the events and activities that we accomplished this year and say thank you to all of our members who made this year a success!

In January, February, and March of this year, CCV had a crucial presence during all three public hearings on the death penalty by the California Commission on the Fair Administra-

tion of Justice. **Amanda and Nick Wilcox, André Herron, Lorrain Taylor, Greg Wilhoit, Janis Gay, Aba Gayle, Vera Ramirez-Crutcher, Melissa Broome, Dawn Spears, Barbara McNab, Mary Kay Raftery, Derrel Myers, and Bill Babbitt** each testified at the hearings. The stories they told are as moving as they are inspirational.



Lorrain Taylor sings on Silence the Violence Day

Several of the Commission members wrote a separate opinion recommending that California repeal its death penalty.

These Commissioners said that they were particularly moved by those murder victim family members who testified in opposition to the death penalty.

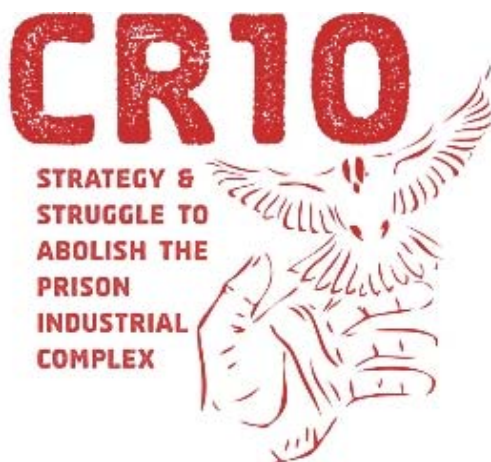
After the Commission released their report and recommendations on the death penalty, CCV members **Dawn Spears, Bill Babbitt, and Aqeela Sherrills** participated in interviews featured on the radio, in print, and on television.

*(CCV Activism continued on page 3)*

## CCV and MVFR Members Join as Panelists at Critical Resistance 10th Anniversary Conference

On a cool, sunny Sunday morning in late September, hundreds gathered at Laney College in Oakland, CA to attend workshops, discussions, and lectures on the final day of Critical Resistance's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference. Critical Resistance is a national, member-based grassroots organization that works to build a mass movement to dismantle "the prison-industrial complex (PIC)," including prisons and policing.

CCV organized a panel discussion at the conference featuring CCV and MVFR members Derrel Myers and Janis Gay, as well as CCV Spokesperson Judy Kerr, to discuss the importance of including victims in this conversation on the PIC. All three panelists support the abolition of the death penalty, but have differing views on abolishing the PIC.



In the discussion, Derrel, Janis, and Judy addressed the tension surrounding what they are "expected" to believe as victims and what they actually believe in regards to the death penalty and its alternatives, and why they have chosen to become activists. They also discussed their individual stances on abolishing the PIC and whether they believe this could be achieved while still having their needs for public safety met.

The dialogue proved to be fruitful and meaningful, inspiring an active conversation with the audience. Although the conversation could have greatly exceeded the allotted hour and fifteen minutes, the panelists were able to use that time to clearly illustrate that a variety of beliefs exist among murder victim family members and that each and every voice must be heard.

## CCV Cosponsors Screenings of "Love Lived on Death Row" Throughout California

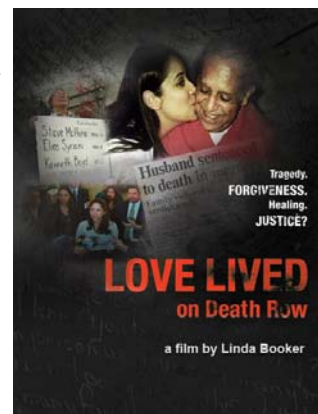
In honor of Respect Life Month and National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, CCV cosponsored four screenings in the month of October of Linda Booker's documentary *Love Lived on Death Row*.

The film tells the remarkable story of the four Syriani siblings whose father was sentenced to death for the murder of their mother. After fourteen years, the children, now adults, decide to visit their father on death row. The film documents their eventual path to forgiveness and love for their father.

We cosponsored a screening in Fairfield, CA with the Community United Methodist Church, in Oceanside, CA with the San Diego Chapter of Peo-

ple of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty, in Redondo Beach, CA with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and in Berkeley, CA with the Respect Life Ministry of the Diocese of Oakland.

Each screening was followed by a CCV member sharing his or her story and leading the audience in a discussion. Matt Gray spoke in Fairfield, Deldelp Medina spoke in Berkeley, and Judy Kerr spoke in Oceanside and Redondo Beach.



# Partnering With Faith Communities in California

As the conversation about alternatives to the death penalty in California grows, so does the audience. Death Penalty Focus, California People of Faith, Progressive Jewish Alliance, and Progressive Christians Uniting collaborated this year and held a series of interfaith luncheons across California to talk about the death penalty. Judy Kerr spoke on behalf of CCV at three of the luncheons: in Santa Clara/San Mateo Counties, in Sacramento County, and in Orange County

Faith leaders from all religious communities participated and each was given a packet of materials that included information



Judy Kerr speaks to faith leaders at the Orange County Clergy Luncheon.

from CCV. Over 200 faith leaders attended the three meetings and participated in heartfelt dialogues on moving their communities forward to action on controversial issues such as the death penalty.

As the last presenter of the day at each of the luncheons, CCV was awarded a unique opportunity to summarize the conversations and to give a face and a voice to the hundreds of murder victim family members from every faith tradition across the state who oppose the death penalty. The impact on these faith leaders was clear, as they have now promised to take our message back to their spiritual communities.

*(CCV Activism continued from page 1)*

In honor of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights' Silence the Violence Day, CCV co-sponsored a vigil with the Family Violence Law Center. On Silence the Violence Day, organizations and individuals throughout California held simultaneous vigils to take a stand against violence and to commemorate those lost to homicide. CCV member **Lorrain Taylor** sang beautifully in remembrance of her two sons.

Throughout the year, CCV members reached out and spoke wherever possible. **Lisa** and **Carol Duncanson** spoke to high school students at Mater Dei High School, **Delane Sims** attended the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of Parents of Murdered Children Conference where she met other conference participants interested in CCV's work, **Janis Gay** and **Derrel Myers** joined me in a panel discussion at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Critical Resistance Conference, and **Matt Gray** and **Deldelp Medina** shared their personal stories following two of our screenings of *Love Lived on Death Row*.

Just this month, I attended the Berkeley City Council meeting. At this meeting, the Berkeley City Council adopted a resolution by the Alameda

County Coalition for Alternatives the Death Penalty calling for the end of death sentences in Alameda County. *(For more information on the Alameda County Coalition and how to get involved on a local level, please see page 4).*

There are many voices of reason in the movement to end the death penalty in California. CCV's role is to provide a platform for us, the loved ones of murder victims in California, to raise our voices and be heard.

Our message is simple: the death penalty does not serve our needs as murder victim family members. The emotional cost of capital crime prosecution delays our ability to grieve effectively and the economic cost of the death penalty in every county in California detracts from vital services that can keep us safe and prevent further crimes.

Our efforts at CCV will continue to strengthen and grow. Our strategy going forward is clear. We recognize that the road ahead is long but never so long as the night when we lost our loved ones to violence. Our voices are being heard.

- Judy Kerr

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

870 Market Street  
Suite 859  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Phone: 415.262.0082  
Fax: 415.243.0994  
Email: [aarti@deathpenalty.org](mailto:aarti@deathpenalty.org)

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

*[www.CaliforniaCrimeVictims.org](http://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, resources, and support to families regardless of their views on the death penalty or whether the perpetrator has been apprehended.

CCV is a joint project of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation, Death Penalty Focus, and the ACLU of Northern California.

CCV Staff:

Judy Kerr, Outreach Coordinator and Spokesperson  
[judy@deathpenalty.org](mailto:judy@deathpenalty.org)

Aarti Kelapure, Program Coordinator  
[aarti@deathpenalty.org](mailto:aarti@deathpenalty.org)

## Upcoming Events and Ways to Get Involved!

**Alameda County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty**

The Alameda County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (ACCADP) is working to end the use of the death penalty in Alameda County, one of the most aggressive death penalty counties in California. To learn more, please **attend an ACCADP meeting, held the first Thursday of each month, 5:30 - 7:00 pm** at 1000 Broadway, 5th Floor in Downtown Oakland or **visit the website: [www.alamedadeathpenalty.org](http://www.alamedadeathpenalty.org)**

**Los Angeles County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty**

The Los Angeles County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is a newly-formed coalition of organizations focused on reducing death sentencing in Los Angeles County and ending the death penalty in California. If you are interested in joining the fight, please **attend the first meeting of LACADP on Wednesday, January 14, 2009** from 6-8pm at the ACLU of Southern California, 1313 West Eighth St., Los Angeles, CA 90017.

Please RSVP to Eric Greene at [egreene@aclu-sc.org](mailto:egreene@aclu-sc.org)

**Visit the CCV Website!**

We are constantly updating the CCV website with the latest news and events. You can also read our members' stories, find information regarding resources for victims, and find publications and media coverage.

**Donate Now**

**Take Action!**

Please also consider clicking these buttons on the website to **make a tax-deductible donation** to CCV and to **send your county's District Attorney a letter** urging him or her to stop seeking death sentences!  
[www.californiacrimevictims.org](http://www.californiacrimevictims.org)

**1,000 Mothers to Prevent Violence Presents: An Evening of Healing**

Saturday, December 20, 2008; 4:00pm - 7:00pm  
East Bay Community Foundation  
#353 Frank Ogawa Plaza, Oakland, CA.  
No Charge! Holiday Dinner and Entertainment!

For more information, please visit  
[www.1000mothers.org](http://www.1000mothers.org)