

CCV Summer News 2012

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california
Crime Victims
for Alternatives
to the Death Penalty

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SAFE California Campaign, Prop 34, Qualifies for Ballot with help from families of murder victims

The SAFE California Campaign, a ballot initiative that will replace the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole, has been busy since it's launch last fall. The campaign turned in nearly 800,000 signatures in February and officially qualified for the ballot on April 23, 2012. Now, for the first time ever, Californians will have the opportunity to vote to replace the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole. The issue will be on the November ballot as YES on Proposition 34.

Prop 34 will save around \$180 million every year by replacing the death penalty with life in prison without parole. It also establishes the SAFE California Fund, a one-time allocation of \$100 million to investigate unsolved murders.

From the beginning of the campaign, families of murder victims who oppose the death penalty have been at the forefront in support. Their voices have been featured across the state in newspapers, in classrooms, on the radio, and on television.

In June, more than 400 murder victims endorsed Prop 34 as victims held a moving event in Los Angeles on Wednesday in honor of their loved ones. They emphasized the need for justice for all families, adding that Prop 34 would put the focus

and money into law enforcement for catching the thousands of murders and rapists who now go free in California, and preventing violence. Each crime victim shared his or her own experience but emphasized that they stand united as they ask voters to support Prop 34.

Bethany Webb lost her sister, Laura, last year in a shooting rampage at a hair salon. Bethany and all



Families share their stories and speak out in support of Proposition 34 in Los Angeles on June 27.

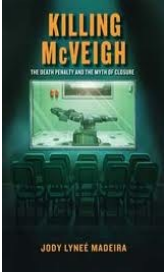
the other victims have already been to court seven times, and the trial hasn't even begun. "Knowing that this process could very well continue for the next 25 years is mind-numbing. The death penalty will not bring back Laura. It will not restore my fami-

ly, and it definitely will not end decades of legal battles that are bound to make us suffer even more," she said in support of the campaign during the press conference.

Victims of violent crime know that we need to be solving unsolved murders, preventing violence before it happens, and helping victims recover after it occurs. Proposition 34 will free up much needed resources to provide safety, justice, and accountability to Californians.

If you are a murder victim family member and want to endorse Proposition 34, please go to: www.yeson34.org/act/support-safe

New Book: Killing McVeigh: The Death Penalty & the Myth of Closure



Jody Madeira, in her book *Killing McVeigh: The Death Penalty and the Myth of Closure*, examines the history of the concept of closure and how that idea translates to victims of violent crime. Using victims of the Oklahoma City Bombing, she examines how the death penalty, and legal process, affect victims in their efforts to heal.

Madeira addresses the concept of closure, saying "First, closure is most affirmatively not what contemporary culture says it is -- absolute finality, in the sense of such colloquial phrases as "over and done with," "dealt with," "put behind one's self,"

"let bygones be bygones," "forgive and forget." Closure is not a state of being, a quality, or even a realization. If closure exists at all, it must be as a process, a recursive series of adjustments that a self makes in response to external, often institutional developments."

The book is most powerful when it lets victims speak for themselves. Ultimately, there is no single answer to the questions she raises about closure, because there is no "right" path to dealing with the aftermath of tragedy.

Read more about the book in a review by Andrew Cohen, *The Atlantic*: bit.ly/mythofclosure

Continuing to work against the death penalty in honor of my son and all victims of violence

By Mary Kay Raftery

My oldest son, Paul Raftery, was murdered on December 8, 2006 in Helena, Montana by two young men looking for drug money. Paul had no money in his wallet.

Prior to Paul's murder, I had been involved with California People of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty. Sometimes, people would tell me that I would feel differently about my views on the death penalty if my child was murdered. After I received the call that Paul had been killed, I stopped to think about my opinion. It hadn't changed.

I don't understand the concept of closure. After all, putting someone to death, in my case those two murderers, will never bring my sorely missed son back. The two murderers received sentences of life with the possibility of parole after 55 years, essentially a life sentence. I felt justice had been served.

I'd had the chance to talk to Paul about my activities with the California People of Faith. That's when he quietly told me he, too, opposed the death penalty. I was surprised, but very gratified that he shared my beliefs having served 12 years as a law enforcement officer.

In November, Californians will have the opportunity to vote for Proposition 34, a ballot initiative that will replace the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole.

This measure will save Californians over \$1 billion in the next

five years and create a one-time fund of \$100 million to help local police investigate and solve the 46% of unsolved murders across the state.



Mary Kay Raftery has been a longtime death penalty opponent, volunteering for California People of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty.

My hope is that no mother is forced to endure the loss of a child to violent crime. That is why I believe so strongly in using our resources to prevent crime and keep our streets safe. The death penalty costs Californians \$184 million a year more than the alternative but equally harsh punishment, life in prison without the possibility of parole. That money would be better spent hiring more police officers to help protect our communities.

I also believe that we need to be providing for the victims of these horrible acts. Prop 34 means that victims will not be dragged through decades of appeals. Inmates will be locked up behind bars forever, where they will work and pay money

toward restitution and victim compensation. They will lose the special privileges that death row provides them, including their own cell. And the tremendous savings will help free up money to support victim services like counseling and medical treatment.

It has now been five years since the young men who murdered our son were sentenced and we received justice. To honor Paul, I am expressing my support for Prop 34. I hope that others will see that it is time we start using limited resources to address the real issues behind violent crime, and to help the victims that are left behind.

Connecticut becomes 17th state to end the death penalty with strong support from murder victim family members

For the past few years, Connecticut has been moving toward abolition, and the voices of murder victim family members have been at the forefront of the debate. After years of work, Connecticut partners finally succeeded in ending the death penalty after a close vote in the legislature. On April 25, 2012, Governor Malloy signed into law the bill that would repeal the death penalty for future crimes. The following is a blog post from one of the victim family members originally featured on Connecticut Victims' Voices against the death penalty.

By Elizabeth Brancato



Image by [Equal Justice USA](#)

On Wednesday, I had the honor of being a guest at the signing of the repeal of the death penalty bill recently passed to the governor from the Connecticut Senate and House of Representatives. When Governor Malloy signed the bill, I was overjoyed. The tone of occasion was solemn and respectful, as it should have been. This was a momentous, life-changing time for the people of our state.

I am so proud to be a citizen of Connecticut. I'm proud that we have passed this law and by doing so, have made it clear that we value human life. I'm proud to join the sixteen other states who have similar laws, and I'm proud to join most of the countries of the world, in proclaiming that we value human life.

I'm very proud to have had a part in making it understood that all victims, and all victim family members, do not necessarily want the death penalty for the murderer of their loved-one. I believe that hearing our individual stories and our collective message made a difference in the outcome of this bill.

For years it seems there has been a general belief that all victim family members have wanted the death penalty for the person who took, often brutally, their loved one. I think some people who didn't necessarily have a point of view, who maybe hadn't given the death penalty much thought, may have thought that it didn't affect them, and that we should probably have it because it makes the victim's families feel better and maybe makes it easier for them to move on. This may be true for some families, but it is not true for the victim families that I know, some of whom were among the more than 180 individual Connecticut victim family members who signed a letter to our legislators telling them that we support repeal of the death penalty. We told them it had been our experience that the death penalty does not help us, and that it in fact hurts us and gets in the way of whatever healing we might ultimately achieve. We each told

them our own experience, and exactly how the death penalty hurt us. I believe our getting this message to our law-makers was one of the factors that helped them pass this legislation.



Ann Stone, Dawn Mancarella, and Jae Caron all lost family members to murder and viewed the 10 hour long floor vote in the House of Representatives.

Make no mistake, this is not the end. It is merely the beginning of a better, more civilized, more rational Connecticut; a state where we understand more and more the value of each of us.

Hopefully, this will be the beginning of

more meaningful and valuable help for victims. Maybe this can even be the beginning of a state where we have fewer and fewer victims because we truly live the strong statement we've made, that we value human life, all human life; because a state that values human life does not let its citizens deal with their mental and physical illness, their illiteracy, their poverty, or their safety, alone.

As I stood in the Governor's office, with the Senators and Representatives, the members of the clergy, the organizers, and the other victim family members, I was proud to stand with all of them, and to count myself among them. I was especially honored to be a representative for all the other victim family members who have worked so long and so hard, and at such great personal cost to repeal the death penalty. They were in my heart.

My mother was also in my heart. I wore her Mother's Ring that day, and I hope she was there with all the other loved ones who have gone and who didn't want more death, but just the simple acknowledgment that we, as citizens of Connecticut, valued their lives because we choose to value all human life. On April 25, 2012, when Governor Malloy signed the bill into law, my heart was full of gratitude, respect, fellowship, happiness, and, for just a moment, a beautiful peace.

Connecticut Victims' Voices is a strong example of the impact victims can have in ending the death penalty. CCV congratulates all of the victims who joined together to accomplish this amazing goal. We hope California will be the next to follow. If you would like to read more of the stories from Connecticut Victims' Voices blog, visit www.ctvictimvoices.org.

CALIFORNIA CRIME VICTIMS FOR ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

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California Crime Victims for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (CCV) is a coalition of murder victim family members who support alternatives to the death penalty. After the horrifying loss of a loved one to homicide, they are left with a clear awareness that the death penalty fails to address the needs of victims on many counts. The coalition does not endorse any specific reason for opposing the death penalty, but supports all families in telling their stories and educates the public about alternatives to the death penalty. CCV can also direct families to available support and resources regardless of their views on the death penalty or whether the perpetrator has been apprehended.

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CCV Members Team up with Justice Advocates



Franky Carrillo and Deldelp Medina join Catholic leaders to discuss the death penalty's effect on the Latino community

This year, Death Penalty Focus proudly launched Justice Advocates, a new project which empowers people with firsthand experience of the death penalty system, including the wrongfully convicted and law enforcement professionals, to become

advocates for fairness and justice. This project has been an incredibly important part of DPF's mission to inform the public about the risks of keeping the death penalty.

In trying to find new formats that are the most powerful and persuasive, CCV has teamed up with the new Justice Advocates for various events and community forums. These discussions allow audiences to see a complete picture of how the death penalty affects everyone from victims to law enforcement to everyday citizens.

In April, Justice Advocates, CCV, and the SAFE California Campaign (Proposition 34) gathered in Los Angeles to lead a

discussion on Latino communities and the death penalty. Included were international perspectives from the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Franky Carrillo, a Justice Advocate who was wrongfully convicted, CCV spokesperson Deldelp Medina, and members of the Catholic leadership. This emotional event showed why Latinos are often the most affected by the death penalty—from the high unsolved murder rates in Latino communities to mistaken eyewitness testimony.

CCV and DPF Justice Advocates are working to create more forums that highlight the many ways in which the death penalty is dysfunctional. Combined, we have a wide range of speakers that can address different community groups. We know that the strength of our speakers raises awareness on a different level than just numbers and facts, it changes minds by showing the human faces that are failed by continuing to use the death penalty.

CCV is always looking for places to share information about the death penalty and victims reactions to the system. If you would like to request a murder victim family member to speak about the death penalty and why it is time for California to replace it with alternatives like life in prison, please visit www.californiacrimevictims.org or e-mail Chelsea Bond at Chelsea@deathpenalty.org.