



Salem Mission Faith Ministries

Marilyn A. Williams Pastor

Bishop A. J. Shankle & Pastor L. V. Shankle, Founders

April 1, 2019

Re: Repeal of the Death Penalty in Oregon

To: House Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Marilyn A. Williams, I am the Pastor of Salem Mission Faith Ministries Church, an African-American woman, an active member of the Salem-Keizer Branch of the NAACP, and I am a long-time citizen of Salem, Oregon. I am writing this letter regarding HB3268, Repeal of the Death Penalty in Oregon and strongly request the positive action of passage for SB 1013.

Over the years too many young African-American males were accused falsely of horrendous crimes that they did not commit and paid dearly with their lives. They have suffered from mental, physical, and trauma abuse from other prisoners, staff, and the denial of being heard and or having proper access to resources that would truly prove their innocence. Time and time again African-Americans have suffered the most, being falsely accused and imprisoned due to the color of their skin and the deep-rooted unrealistic fear and racist belief that African-Americans are dangerous, and they are criminals. Many of the prisoners are sitting on death row waiting for the clock to stop ticking on them. African-American families are torn apart from each other, as if they are still enslaved; mothers from children, wives, from husbands, children from fathers. Families are victims as well and they are struggling to survive and comprehend what is happening to their loved ones and to themselves. Most of the prisoners come from low socio-economic status, thereby, they are not privy to the funds or resources of the wealthy. Yet, with all of the new technology that has been developed today, very few are receiving any assistance in procuring the evidence that is needed to set them free. Their hope of ever being heard and their chance of proving that they are truly innocent is slowly fading from them and their families.

What about the ones who actually committed the crime? Taking their lives isn't worth it, we cannot replace the life that is taken. The best way for a person that is guilty, is to serve time in prison not just a short slap on the wrist, but a long time to think every day of how they took a life that had potential to do great things. Get them the medical help that they need, review their behavior while being imprisoned and encourage them to do things that are useful while they are serving their time. The family members of the victims and the prisoner family that they leave behind are struggling to make ends meet, it causes a hardship on all the families. Instead of the death penalty, have them work while serving time in prison to help the families that were affected by thees as a form of restitution.

As a Pastor, African-American woman, mother, and a member of the NAACP, I am against the death penalty. Jesus, when he was alive on this earth changed the meaning of death to life. He let us know that we are to forgive and to love and to restore life, not an eye for an eye, but to love and to forgive. He forgave the thief on the cross when all the thief said, "remember me." The other thief had a chance to ask forgiveness as well, but he chose not to. That's where the life in prison would have worked because he would have lived the rest of his days in prison thinking



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about what he did wrong and how he missed his chance of forgiveness. Jesus kept teaching about forgiveness, not taking a life, but to forgive and to help that person see the errors of their ways.

Life in prison helps give the justice system a chance to see and find if they have also committed an error. We already have a wall of hate built between us and no love or forgiveness for our fellow man or woman. It's time to repeal the death penalty law, it doesn't bring peace to the families nor does it heal the deep wounds or grief... it just prolongs it. The late Coretta Scott King once said, "As one whose husband and mother-in-law have died victims of murder and assassination, I stand firmly and unequivocally opposed to the death penalty for those convicted of capital offenses...An evil deed is not redeemed by an evil deed of retaliation.

Sincerely,

Marilyn A. Williams

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