

There's nothing like experience...

This February, The Journey of Hope ...From Violence to Healing and Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (CUADP) are working with activists working with activists from Seattle to San Diego to bring a compelling and emotional educational program to your community.

Please contact abe@cuadp.org or _____ to learn how to get on the schedule.



Juan Melendez: Juan Roberto Melendez Colon became the 24th person exonerated and released from Florida's death row when he was freed on January 3, 2002 after spending 17 years, eight months and one day facing execution for a crime he did not commit. **Melendez was convicted in 1984 at the age of 33 with no physical evidence linking him to the crime and testimony from questionable witnesses. In fact, prosecutors hid evidence and lied to the court in order to protect the real killer, a police informant.** Melendez's conviction fell apart when the police informant's confession came to light in 1999 - a confession that prosecutors knew about

before they took Melendez to trial. More information about this case is available on the internet at: <http://www.fadp.org/24threlease.html>



Bill Pelke: Bill Pelke's 78 - year - old grandmother Ruth, taught Bible lessons to neighborhood children in Gary, Indiana. On May 14th, 1985, four ninth grade girls from the local high school come to her door asking about the lessons, and she invited them into her home. As she turned to get information for them, one grabbed a vase and hit her over the head. Another pulled a knife out of her purse and began to stab her. Ruth was stabbed a total of 33 times. While one of the girls held the knife inside her, the others ransacked her house. They ended up with \$10.00 and her ten-year-old car. A year later, one of the girls, Paula Cooper, was sentenced to death for the crime. She had been 15 when the murder occurred, and at 16 became the youngest female on death row in the United States. **Originally supportive of Paula's death sentence, Bill eventually forgave Paula, began corresponding with her, and worked to overturn her sentence.** She is now serving 60 years in prison. Bill recently retired after over 30 years of service with Bethlehem Steel and has devoted his retirement to abolishing the

death penalty. He recently wrote a book about his experiences and travels worldwide to share his message of forgiveness and hope. More information is available at http://www.journeyofhope.org/People/bill_pelke.htm



Abe Bonowitz: Abe Bonowitz has been working to educate the public about human rights problems, in particular the death penalty and the need for alternatives to the death penalty, for over 15 years. **But he only came to his position after arguing FOR the death penalty for almost a year in an attempt to disprove the facts presented by death penalty opponents.** Bonowitz has gained first hand knowledge of the issue by working in the death penalty section of the Ohio Public Defender Commission, with murder victims' family members and death row family members, and with death row inmates in Alabama, California, Florida, Ohio, Texas and other states as well. He appears briefly in the film "Dead Man Walking" and has

worked closely on several projects with author and spiritual advisor Helen Prejean, CSJ. Bonowitz is former board member of Amnesty International USA, former executive director of the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation, and currently serves as the Director of Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (CUADP). Working closely with Melendez and Pelke, Bonowitz fills in the "pragmatics" of the issue, and provides the tools for next steps for those ready to take action to Stop State Killing! More information is available at http://www.cuadp.org/abe_bio.html

More information about the Journey of Hope Abolition Day Tour from Seattle to San Diego is available at www.CUADP.org or by calling 800-973-6548.

What do they say after we're gone?

"I spoke with some of my students and they thought this was one of the best "panels" we have presented."

-- Catherine Arcabascio
Associate Professor of Law
Nova Southeastern University

"Thanks to you and Juan for the compelling presentation at the Levin College of Law on March 18. Despite the fact that students had just returned from spring break the day before, and so had very little notice of the event, we had unusually good attendance by law students – it seemed to me the courtroom was about 3/4 full. [Actually, it was standing room only! Liz was in the front row --abe] Their enthusiasm and interest was apparent by the large number of questions, and in remarks I overheard afterwards. I heard one student say that if she won the lottery, she would go work on death penalty cases for the rest of her life!

"It's so important to expose law students to the realities of the judicial system, and to the opportunities they have to become engaged in working for justice. I can't think of a better way to do that than to have Juan Melendez tell of his experience. Thanks again, and to Mr. Melendez."

Elizabeth McCulloch
Center for Governmental Responsibility
Levin College of Law
University of Florida

"I can't thank you and Mr. Melendez enough for your visit to the University of Florida law school last week. We were all amazed and moved by Mr. Melendez's strength and capacity for forgiveness, and by your dedication to your work and your expertise on the death penalty. Especially considering how quickly everything was put together, I think we can say it all went off without a hitch. Let me know if you have any problems getting the honorarium check.... The contact person....."

Take care,
Caroline Kravath
Florida Institutional Legal Services

At 09:57 AM 3/26/2003 -0500, you wrote:

Hi Abe,

I work at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy in Miami, and you spoke to some of my Religion classes last Friday. Our students liked very much the presentations and I thank you very much for taking the time to come here and speak to all of us. They were also very touched by SueZann and Juan and their stories. Many of them have expressed concern for Juan, since he was only released a year ago, and he explained that he cannot pick fruit anymore, they are worried about him and how he gets along now. They are interested in doing something for him to help him out. One of their ideas is to have a bake sale here at the school and send him whatever they make from that. I know it is small, but I guess it is their way of letting him know they care for what he has been through. I am writing to you to basically get your opinion on this since you know him. I would not want to offend him in any way, and I want to make sure this is appropriate. Please let me know what you think of this. I really appreciate it!

Thank you again for your time!
Sincerely,

Lina Ramirez
Our Lady of Lourdes Academy