



"In all religions, we make a choice about what we emphasize, and I choose to come down on the side of a loving God."
— Rev Bernice King



Religious Leaders Dialogue on the Death Penalty

Monday, October 24, 2011
7:00 - 9:00pm

Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University
San Antonio, Texas

SPONSORS

Bishop James Dorff, Southwest Texas Conference UMC

Catholic Mobilizing Network

Jesuit Fathers of San Antonio

Marianist Social Justice Collaborative

Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation

National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

St. Mary's University

Temple Beth-El—Rabbi Barry Block

Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission

Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

An Interfaith Call for the End of the Use of the Death Penalty

Today, as faith leaders of many and varied faith communities, we join in common cause, raising a common voice, to express our deeply felt concerns regarding the use of the death penalty in the state of Texas. While we address the leaders of our state, our legislators, our Governor and other elected officials, we also speak to all people of good will in presenting both our moral and practical reservations over the issue of capital punishment.

We do not, however, speak alone. We note that in our congregations, our parishes, our synagogues and throughout our communities increasing numbers of Texans are beginning to question the wisdom, efficacy and virtue of the death penalty as a means to confront crime and achieve justice.

We join with many Texans in questioning our state's death penalty system, which has consistently been shown to be unfair and inaccurate. Texas leads the nation in the number of executions carried out each year. In fact, our state is a significant outlier in this regard, accounting for more than one third of all executions nationwide since 1976. Too often it has not been the crime itself but rather such factors as race, socioeconomics, geography, or politics that have determined the application of the death penalty. And too often, individuals have been wrongfully convicted and spent years on death row for crimes they did not commit.

As faith leaders, we are greatly disturbed by the presence of violence in our communities. We believe that instead of allocating scarce resources to fund an irrevocably flawed capital punishment system, the State of Texas should invest in victim support services, effective law enforcement, drug treatment programs, child and family services, and mental healthcare – all measures that hold potential for preventing future acts of violence. We should do all we can to make sure our state's resources are directed towards the improvement of life, not its destruction.

We firmly believe that those who commit terrible crimes should be held accountable for their actions and we advocate for a justice system that is both humane and restorative. It is particularly important to us to support the victims of violent crimes and their family members in their grief and suffering and promote measures that will facilitate their healing. In responding to one of our greatest societal problems, we believe the state must consider solutions to violent crime that address our communities' need for safety and healing, not retribution.

As people of faith, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our opposition to the death penalty and to express our belief in the sacredness of human life and in the human capacity for redemption. It is this respect for all life that prompts us to join the diversity of voices across the state calling for repeal of the death penalty in Texas.

We urge our elected officials, to take a closer look at the reality of capital punishment in Texas and to seek alternative ways to achieve healing and justice for all those who suffer in the wake of violent crimes. We pray for the time when our state is led away from this unnecessary and arbitrary form of punishment.

Sincerely,

Rev. MA Rashad Berry

Bishop Oscar Cantú

Father Larry Christian

Bishop James E. Dorff

Bishop Robert Hibbs

Elder Hilary Shuford

Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl

Bishop Rev. Dr. Ray Tiemann

Program

Welcome

Opening Remarks

Karen Clifton, Moderator

Panelist Reflections

Rev. MA Rashad Berry

Father Larry Christian

Bishop Robert Hibbs

Elder Hilary Shuford

Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl

Bishop Ray Tiemann

Rev. Virgilio Vasquez-Garza

Question and Answer Session

Karen Clifton

Call to Action

Anita Grabowski

Texas Campaign Coordinator, National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

Closing Remarks and Prayer

Bishop Oscar Cantú

Please submit questions in writing to ushers available on each aisle.

Please visit exhibitors for more information before and after the program.

Moderator

Karen Clifton

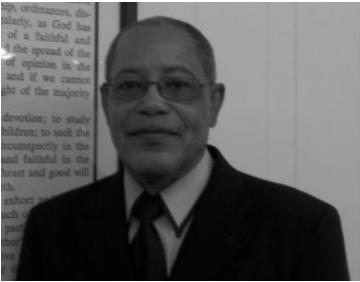


Karen Clifton is the Executive Director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty. She began her work against the death penalty in Houston, Texas when her social justice and advocacy projects intersected with Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ. In 2008, Karen led the formation of the Catholic

Mobilizing Network (CMN). Headquartered in Washington, D.C., CMN is an educational and organizational campaign which collaborates with the U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops to end the use of the death penalty by working to educate the 67 million U.S. Catholics on the Church's teaching.

Karen has been an organizer and advocate since 1990. Her work has been associated with the Catholic Worker, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, San Jose Clinic, AIDS ministry, Ignatian Spirituality Project and parish ministry in Houston and D.C. Karen holds a Masters in Divinity from the University of St. Thomas, St. Mary's School of Theology and has been a spiritual director since 1996. Karen was recently awarded the 2011 Servitor Pacis Award by the Foundation for Peace, which serves to extend the scope and reach of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Vatican to the United Nations.

Panelists

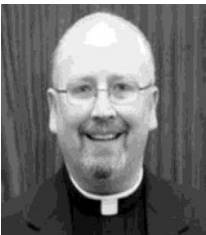


Rev. MA Rashad Berry

Rev. Berry serves as the Associate Minister at Canaan Missionary First Baptist Church, as a dedicated, hard working individual with a strong faith in the Lord and willingness to help those who are in need and less fortunate. He is an Ordained

Deacon as well as an Ordained Minister for fourteen years. Rev. Berry is married to Irene Marie Berry for nine years and has four children, Antoinette, Vericka, Joshua, and Lucia.

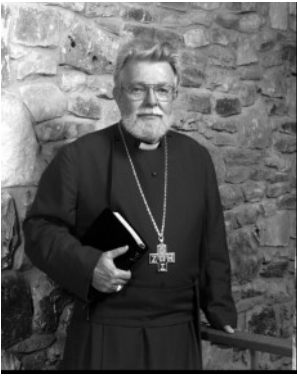
A member of NAACP, San Antonio for four years, he was elected as 2nd Vice-President in 2011. As 2nd Vice-President, he oversees the Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs Committee, the Education Committee, the Housing Committee, Criminal Justice Committee, and Legal Redress Committee. Rev. Berry works with the Mayor, Sheriff, and other elected officials for the purpose of improving the political, educational, social, and economics status of African-Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities. He also works to eliminate racial prejudice, to keep the public aware of the adverse effects of discrimination, and to take lawful action to secure the elimination of racial discrimination.



Father Larry Christian

Father Larry Christian serves as the pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in San Antonio, Texas.

Originally from California, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1983, earning a Master of Divinity from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley. He also earned a Master of Arts in Counseling from Holy Names College in Oakland, California in 1987. He has worked with Catholic parishes as both pastor and as a faith formation minister for over 25 years. He formerly served as the rector of Assumption Seminary for six years, overseeing the \$13 million expansion campaign that was completed in 2007. He was assigned as pastor of St. Francis of Assisi in 2010 and also serves the Archdiocese of San Antonio as an adjunct professor at Oblate School of Theology.



Bishop Robert Hibbs

Bishop Robert Hibbs was born April 20, 1932, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut with a BA. He received his S.T.B. from General Theological Seminary. He was ordained deacon by Bishop Roberts in June 1957 and priest in December 1957 by Bishop Hart.

He married Nancy Joane Alexander on August 24, 1957. They have three children, one of whom is deceased.

Bishop Hibbs was consecrated Bishop Suffragan of the West Texas Episcopal Diocese on January 6, 1996, by Bishop Browning, Bishop Scott Field Bailey, Bishop John Herbert MacNaughton, Bishop Earl Nicholas McArthur and Bishop James Edward Folts and is 911 in American Succession. He received his D.D. from The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest. He retired in December 2003.



Elder Hilary Shuford

Elder Hilary Shuford grew up in Athens, Georgia and joined the First Presbyterian Church, where she met her husband Harry.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts in History at Duke University in 1979 and a Juris Doctor from the University of Georgia School of Law in 1983. She engaged in the practice of law from 1983 to 2001.

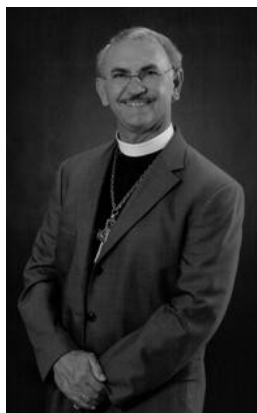
From June 2001 she served as General Presbyter of Maumee Valley Presbytery in northwest Ohio and southern Michigan, where she remained until receiving her call in July 2009 as Executive Presbyter of Mission Presbytery.

Elder Shuford is a candidate under care of Maumee Valley Presbytery and is a “senior” at McCormick Theological Seminary.



Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl

Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl became Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth-El, in San Antonio, Texas, in 2002, after serving for 26 years as its Senior Rabbi. Previously, he served as a Chaplain in the United States Army and as Rabbi of Temple B'nai Israel (The Henry Cohen Memorial) in Galveston, Texas.



Bishop Ray Tiemann

The Rev. Dr. Ray Tiemann was elected in May 2000 to serve as the fourth bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He began his first six-year term of office on September 1, 2000 and was re-elected in May, 2006 for a second six-year term.

Prior to his election as bishop, Rev. Tiemann served as co-pastor at Holy Ghost Lutheran Church in Fredericksburg, Texas, since 1985. He was pastor of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church of Cameron, Texas, from 1979 to 1985.



Rev. Virgilio Vasquez-Garza

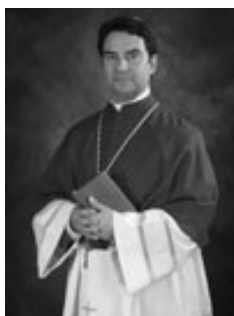
Rev. Virgilio Vasquez-Garza was born in Monterrey, Nuevo León, México, where he attended public schools and college. He attended Methodist seminaries in Mexico City (Comunidad Teológica), Buenos Aires, Argentina (Instituto Superior de Estudios Teológicos) and Kansas City, Missouri (Saint Paul School of Theology).

Rev. Vasquez-Garza began serving the United Methodist Church in the USA in 1980. In Texas, he served as a Pastor in Zapata, Laredo, and Corpus Christi. He was superintendent in the San Antonio District of the Southwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church and has

served as Assistant to the Episcopal Office in the Southwest Texas Conference since 2010.

He is married to Acacia García-Vázquez and they have two adult sons and three grandchildren.

Rev. Vasquez-Garza has been a delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences of the United Methodist Church and has served in General Boards and Councils of the United Methodist Church.



Closing Remarks: Bishop Oscar Cantú

Most Rev. Oscar Cantú, S.T.L. was born December 5, 1966, in Houston, the son of Ramiro and Maria de Jesus Cantú, natives of small towns near Monterrey, Mexico. He is the fifth of eight children.

Bishop Cantú is a product of Houston's Catholic schools, attending Holy Name Catholic School and St. Thomas High School. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Dallas.

He then received his Master in Divinity and Master in Theological Studies from the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He continued at the Pontifical Gregorian University, located in Rome, where he earned his S.T.L. in Dogmatic Theology. He currently is completing his work for a doctorate in Dogmatic Theology. Bishop Cantú was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Houston on May 21, 1994.

He has spent his priestly career working in parishes throughout the Houston metropolitan area. Since 2003, he has taught at the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He also has taught at the University of St. Thomas School of Theology located at St. Mary's Seminary. Bishop Cantú is fluent in Spanish, Italian, and French.

From 2004 to 2007, Bishop Cantú co-hosted an interfaith radio show in Houston called "Show of Faith." His co-hosts included a Jewish rabbi and a Protestant minister. The program discussed issues from the perspective of their individual faith traditions.

Bishop Cantú has also been involved in The Metropolitan Organization (TMO). Its mission is to publicly address important social issues in the community such as fair housing, immigration, education and many others. Bishop Cantú was appointed Titular Bishop of Dardano and Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio on April 10, 2008. He was ordained by The Most Reverend José H. Gomez, S.T.D., Archbishop of San Antonio.

Opportunities for Involvement

- Become a **MEMBER** of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP) at www.tcadp.org. **SUBSCRIBE** to the TCADP email list, which provides information on upcoming executions, breaking news, legislative updates, and local events.
- Become involved in TCADP's **BEXAR COUNTY CAMPAIGN**:
 - Sign up for the **COMMUNITY ACTIVIST TRAINING** on December 3rd from 10-2pm. Come learn about the death penalty in Texas and how to get involved to help reduce the number of new death sentences and executions. www.tcadp.org/bexar-county-campaign.org
 - Invite a TCADP staff **ORGANIZER** to come talk to your faith or community group about how you can make a difference.
 - Host a **SPEAKER** or watch a **FILM** on the death penalty with your faith community, civic organization, or student group (films and speakers available from TCADP).
 - Sign up to **VOLUNTEER** for special events, fundraisers and other community outreach opportunities.
- **WRITE, VISIT, and CALL** your county commissioner, state senator and representative and share your concerns about the Texas death penalty. Share any information you gather with the TCADP office.
- Ask your **CLERGY** to sign the interfaith sign-on letter (available at <http://www.tcadp.org/interfaith-sign-on-letter> in Spanish and English).
- If you are a faith leader, contact TCADP for resources and ideas for **MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE MEETINGS, CLERGY BREAKFASTS** and other **PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS** where you can talk with fellow faith leaders about the death penalty.
- Learn about TCADP's partnership with **MURDER VICTIMS' FAMILIES FOR RECONCILIATION** (www.MVFR.org).
- Attend the TCADP **ANNUAL CONFERENCE**: February 18, 2012, in San Antonio at the University of Incarnate Word Sky Room. <http://tcadp.org/what-we-do/annual-conference/> (Special registration rates for TCADP members, students and early bird.)

Religious Statements on the Death Penalty

See more statements at <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/religion-and-death-penalty#state>

American Baptist Church, USA (1982)

"Therefore, the General Board of the American Baptist Churches recommends the abolition of capital punishment in those states which still practice it and urges churches and members of our American Baptist constituency to support groups and agencies working for the abolition of capital punishment in those governmental jurisdictions of the U.S. where it is still authorized by law."

The Episcopal Church, USA (1991)

"RESOLVED, that this 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church urge the provinces, dioceses, parishes, missions, and individual members of this Church to engage in serious study on the subject of capital punishment and work actively to abolish the death penalty in their states."

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1991)

"It is because of this church's commitment to justice that we oppose the death penalty. Lutheran Christians have called for an assault on the root causes of violent crime, an assault for which executions are no substitute. The ongoing controversy surrounding the death penalty shows the weaknesses of its justifications. We would be a better society by joining the many nations that have already abolished capital punishment."

Union for Reform Judaism (1959)

Since 1959, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) have formally opposed the death penalty. The CCAR resolved in 1979 that "both in concept and in practice, Jewish tradition found capital punishment repugnant" and there is no persuasive evidence "that capital punishment serves as a deterrent to crime." The URJ notes that: "We believe that there is no crime for which the taking of human life by society is justified, and that it is the obligation of society to evolve other methods in dealing with crime. We appeal to our congregants and to our co-religionists and to all who cherish God's mercy and love to join in efforts to eliminate this practice [of capital punishment] which lies as a stain upon civilization and our religious conscience."

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (1985)

"THEREFORE, the 197th General Assembly (1985): Reaffirms the position of the General Assemblies of the United Presbyterian Church of 1959, 1965, and 1977, and of the Presbyterian Church U.S. of 1966, and declares its continuing opposition to capital punishment."

United Methodist Church (2004)

"We believe the death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore and transform all human beings. The United Methodist Church is deeply concerned about crime throughout the world and the value of any life taken by a murder or homicide. We believe all human life is sacred and created by God and therefore, we must see all human life as significant and valuable. When governments implement the death penalty (capital punishment), then the life of the convicted person is devalued and all possibility of change in that person's life ends."

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (2005)

"Since 1980, the USCCB has taken a strong and principled position against the use of the death penalty in the United States. We oppose the use of the death penalty not just for what it does to those guilty of horrible crimes, but for how it affects society; moreover, Pope John Paul II, in both *The Gospel of Life* and the revised Catechism of the Catholic Church, states that our society has adequate alternative means today to protect society from violent crime without resorting to capital punishment."

Facts About the Death Penalty

Since 1976, Bexar County juries have sentenced **75 people to death, the third-highest number among all counties in Texas**, behind Harris and Dallas Counties. Of these death sentences, 33 have resulted in execution, 19 have been commuted to sentences other than death, and 23 are still awaiting execution.

New death sentences in Bexar County have dropped in recent years, however, reflecting both statewide and national trends. Overall, new death sentences in Texas have dropped **more than 70% since 2003**, reaching a historic low in 2010 when just eight people were sentenced to death statewide.

Bexar County has **sentenced three people to death since 2007**, with the most recent sentence in 2009.

In this same time period, **Bexar County juries rejected the death penalty in two capital murder trials**, opting instead for the sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Since 1973, **138 Individuals nationwide—including 12 in Texas**—have been released from death row based on evidence of their wrongful conviction.

There are serious concerns regarding a number of **potential wrongful executions** in Texas, including the case of **Cameron Willingham** (executed in 2004 on the basis of false expert witness testimony and faulty forensic analysis) and **Claude Jones** (executed in 2000 on the basis of faulty forensic analysis).

There also have been **investigations into whether Texas wrongfully executed Ruben Cantu in 1993**. Cantu was 17 when he allegedly robbed and killed Pedro Gomez in San Antonio in November 1984. Juan Moreno, the lone eyewitness, later claimed that he had been pressured by law enforcement to name Cantu, but that Cantu did not commit the offense. David Garza, the alleged codefendant, refused to identify Cantu even to help his own case.

In Texas, the **cost of an average death penalty case** is nearly **3 times higher** than imprisoning someone in maximum security for 40 years (Dallas Morning News).

The State of **Texas has executed 475 people since 1982**, out of 1271 nationwide since 1977.

Four states have abandoned the death penalty in recent years - New York, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Illinois. A total of **16 states and the District of Columbia do not allow the death penalty**.

139 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. In 2008, **93% of all known executions** took place in five countries—**China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the USA**.

Thank You

SPONSORS:

Bishop James Dorff, Southwest Texas Conference UMC
Catholic Mobilizing Network
Jesuit Fathers of San Antonio
Marianist Social Justice Collaborative
Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation
National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty
St. Mary's University
Temple Beth-El—Rabbi Barry Block
Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission
Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty
Texas Impact

Dialogue Planning Committee:

Rick Doucette	Susan Ives
Father Marty Elsner	Vicki McCuiston
Andrew Getz	Ann Morrison
Anita Grabowski	Cynthia Phillips
Brother Brian Halderman	

Trinity University and Laurie Auditorium, especially:

Kevin Hawkins
Dr. Rob Huesca
Rev. Stephen Nickle
Dr. Richard Reed

Volunteers:

Tina Arrendondo	Amira Kalifa
Helen Atkinson	Ebony Kizzee
Clarissa Broughton	Nancy Price
Helene Burns	Sr. Patrice Sullivan
Sheila Castle	Caitlin Taylor
Amelia Cover	May Watson
Kari Gords	Gay Wright
Katherine Hess	

Amnesty International Chapter, Trinity University
Amnesty International Chapter, St. Mary's University

Henry B. Gonzalez Bexar County Campaign Interns:

Lavinia Bendandi
Kristine Brown
Matt Decker

Notes

“The administration of the death penalty has a demonstrated bias against the poor, ethnic minorities, and even persons considered by many to be mentally ill. As frightening as these realities are, there is an even greater concern among us.

As followers and disciples of Jesus Christ, we have to remember that He defended a woman who was guilty of a crime which in those days was punishable by death. Jesus did not question her guilt. Jesus did question the right of the folks around her to end her life because of her crime (John 8:7). As United Methodists we know that Jesus rejected the concept of an eye for eye and a tooth for a tooth (Matthew 5:38). We further embrace the reality that only God creates life, and therefore, it should not be ended by mere mortals.”

—Bishop James E. Dorff, Southwest Conference United Methodist Church

**"As a person of faith, I believe that killing, even on behalf of the state, arouses violence, heightens our need to vent our wrath upon the criminal, and undermines our respect for the sanctity of human life."
- Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl**

This is a project of the Bexar County Campaign. Learn more at
<http://tcadp.org/bexar-county-campaign/>



2709 S Lamar
Austin, TX 78704
Phone: 512.441.1808
E-mail: info@tcadp.org
Web: www.tcadp.org