By Sue Weishar, Ph.D.

Fifty-Six Lives Seeking Mercy: An Update on Death Penalty Abolition Efforts in Louisiana

Since the first execution in Louisiana in 1721, 1,228 individuals have been put to death in the state, the government of Louisiana. The last execution was the escape attempt at an execution for the escape amnesty. On April 20, 2022, the state and Governor John Bel Edwards strongly supported the Louisiana Justice and Opportunity Commission to abolish the death penalty, citing its Catholic faith as the reason. The venue for this historic event was the Canizaro School of Law, a Jesuit institution, with the Loyola Community Center for Catholic Studies and the Center for Ethics and Economic Justice held at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law.

The foundation of a Catholic Social Teaching is the belief in the sacredness of all human life and the inherent dignity of every human being. "...It is normal for people who have been through what my family has been through to experience intense emotions—rage, anger, depression, fear, and a desire for vengeance..."

TBD.

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The JSRI is currently accepting applications for submission of articles to the JSRI justsouth monthly newsletter. Please see Guidelines for Submission. Interested authors will receive a $500 honorarium from JSRI for articles/videos published in the newsletter.

Upcoming events

JSRI and campus partners are working with Catholic Social Teaching, a Jesuit institution, to bring important events in December to educate and engage Loyola students on ending the death penalty in Louisiana and across the country and to support the Clemency Mobilizing Network.

St. Helen Prejean, SSJ, retired death penalty abolitionist and author of Dead Man Walking will speak on Thursday, September 10, from 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM in Miller Hall.

St. Helen will speak Tuesday evening, September 12, in Catholic Studies lecture gathering, with beginning with Mass of 5:30 PM in the Chapel Parish Joss, followed by dinner, Sr. Helen’s talk, and fellowship. St. Helen’s lecture and conversation will join in the Holy Name of Jesus Parish Hall, 6220 LaSalle Place.

On Thursday, September 12, two death penalty awareness speakers will experience the conference being held to end the death penalty and later wandered at the Reniscencias Hotel and Conference Center.

Also on Thursday, September 19, 18 to 12:30, the Loyola Law School will hold a panel discussion leading death row awareness and after work on ending the death penalty, June in Louisiana, Louisiana (TBD).

Please join us for an advocacy email list to stay informed of death penalty abolition efforts in Louisiana. And please pray that Governor Edwards does everything in his powers to spare the lives of the 56 petitioners. It is now clear that the last person executed in Louisiana was Leslie Dale Martin on May 10, 2002. Since a four-year national moratorium on the death penalty was declared in Louisiana, HB 228, strongly supported by Governor Edwards. It was particularly move by the statement of Brett Malone, whose mother was kidnapped and murdered and executed in 1976, that I was moved by the statement of Brett Malone, whose mother was kidnapped and murdered and executed in 1976.

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