



gcpagenda.org

COALITION FOR THE PEOPLES' AGENDA

...to improve the quality of governance

April 17, 2011

Georgia State Board of Pardons & Paroles
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE
Suite 458, Balcony Level, East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Chairman Donald and Members of the Board:

I am writing out of concern for the case of Troy Anthony Davis. I appreciate the time spent in 2007 by the Board to examine the case, and I am aware of the heavy burden you bear as the institution tasked with the last word in determining his fate and the resolution of the quest for justice for police officer Mark Allen MacPhail.

I know that you are aware of the many issues of concern in Mr. Davis's case, which have garnered worldwide attention about the system of justice in the US and in our state. Both the MacPhail and Davis families have been on a long and painful journey through various legal proceedings and four execution dates.

I was among the many who hoped that the special hearing ordered by the U.S. Supreme court would at last provide some clarity to this case, and that we could finally be certain as to Troy Davis's innocence or guilt. Unfortunately, the result of the hearing was not clarity, but more confusion. Mr. Davis could not prove his innocence, but the state of Georgia could not remove doubts about his guilt.

Several witnesses testified at the hearing that they had been coerced by police into making false statements against Troy Davis at the trial. One witness testified for the first time that he saw a relative of his commit the crime. The state challenged the credibility of these witnesses, yet it was many of these same witnesses whose credibility was the basis for Troy Davis's conviction.

Our faith in the justice system exists only to the extent that we can be confident it is genuinely concerned with preventing and correcting injustice. An execution of Troy Davis without a hearing to examine his innocence claim would have profoundly shattered that faith. The fact that a special hearing was called was indeed encouraging, but the failure of that hearing to resolve doubts leaves us back where we were before. Putting a prisoner to death when we cannot be sure of his guilt would surely cause the public to question the dedication of our state to protecting against injustice.

Steering Committee

Dr. Joseph E. Lowery
Convenor

Rev. J. Allen Milner
Treasurer

Rep. Alisha Morgan
Secretary

Judith Skidmore
Assistant Secretary

Joe Beasley
RAINBOW/PUSH

Rev. Richard Bright
Morehouse School of Medicine

Rep. Tyrone Brooks
GABEO

Bill Cannon
Black Ice Summit

Rev. Richard Cobble
Concerned Black Clergy

Thomas Dortch
100 Black Men

Edward Dubose
Georgia NAACP

Rev. Henry Ficklin
Macon, Georgia

Charlie Flemming
Atlanta North Georgia Labor Council

Rep. Emmanuel Jones
Georgia Legislative Black Caucus

Janice Mathis, Esq.
Rainbow/PUSH

Rev. Timothy McDonald
First Iconium Baptist Church

Rev. Bennie Mitchell
Savannah, Georgia

Rev. Anthony A. W. Motley
New Era Baptist Convention

Na'Taki Osborne Jelks
Atlanta Millennium Section NCNW

Bobbie Paul
Women's Actions for New Directions

Rep. Roberta Abdul-Salaam
Clayton County Branch NAACP

Dr. Kenneth Samuels
Dekalb Branch NAACP

Rita Jackson Samuels
Georgia Coalition of Black Women

Leonard Tate
Trinity House

Rev. Fred D. Taylor
SCLC

Rev. Thurmond Tillman
Savannah, Georgia

Rev. R. L. White
Atlanta Branch NAACP

Robin Williams
UFCW

Staff

Helen Butler
Executive Director

Felicia Davis
Planning Consultant

Kevin Ross
Counsel

100 Auburn Avenue ~ Suite 102 ~ Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Telephone: (404) 653-1199 Facsimile: (404) 653-0086

Email: coalitiong@bellsouth.net www.gcpagenda.org

Page 2
Pardons & Paroles
April 17, 2011

I believe this is why you took such a strong moral and common-sense position following the postponement of Mr. Davis's first execution date in 2007. Then, you said that the Board "will not allow an execution to proceed in this State unless and until its members are convinced that there is no doubt as to the guilt of the accused."

This statement signified a truly compelling commitment to justice, which, if kept, could inspire much greater confidence in our criminal justice system. I urge you to keep that commitment now and grant clemency for Troy Anthony Davis.

I hold you in my prayers as you confront this very serious set of choices in the very near future. It is my prayer that you will act with courage to ensure that justice and fairness will prevail. Thank you for your time and attention.

Love Embraces Justice,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joseph E. Lowery". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Love Embraces Justice,".

Joseph E. Lowery,
Convenor