



EQUAL JUSTICE USA

2001 Annual Report

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* left in 2001

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Equal Justice USA is a project of the Quixote Center, a grassroots, social justice non-profit working for structural change. Equal Justice USA (EJ) operates three programs. **MORATORIUM Now!**, our primary program, is a grassroots effort to win a halt to executions state-by-state. The **Grassroots Investigation Project (GRIP)** trains volunteer activists and family members to investigate cases when lawyers have limited resources. The **DC Area Books to Prisons Project** is a volunteer-run network collecting books to send to prisoners and working to educate the public about the epidemic of prison illiteracy.

MORATORIUM Now! CAMPAIGN

2001 is the year in which the national movement to halt executions took a major leap from the grassroots to statehouses around the country. Local government and organizational resolutions and other public expressions of support that the **MORATORIUM Now!** campaign has mobilized laid the base for many states to consider legislation or executive orders halting executions.

Expanding Grassroots Momentum and Organization

Nationwide, 63 local governments and nearly 2,000 national, state, and local organizations and faith communities have adopted resolutions urging a moratorium. Equal Justice USA maintains this national listing on its National Tally.

Momentum continued after September 11 with the Lincoln, Nebraska City Council; West Hollywood and Santa Clara County, California; and



Cincinnati, Ohio all adopting resolutions urging a halt to executions. Moratorium resolutions continue to be considered everyday in communities around the country. Notable additions in 2001 included the Medical Society of the State of New York, the American Psychological Association, and the National Conference of Black Mayors.

Throughout 2001, Equal Justice USA's MORATORIUM Now! campaign continued to serve the national movement as an information and organizing clearinghouse. Our national organizing staff provided materials, training, support, and encouragement to activists on a daily basis. For the third year in a row, we coordinated the Moratorium Organizing Committee, a network linking activists from 24 states via e-mail and conference calls.

Our website quixote.org/ej has been expanded and made more user friendly. A new comprehensive STATE BY STATE section went on-line in December, which includes links to state contacts, action alerts, state legislation, and other news and information.

From the grassroots to the
statehouse!

Since Equal Justice USA launched MORATORIUM Now! in 1997, we've played a unique national role by forging strong ties to state organizations. *States are*

the frontline of our movement. They are where the vast majority of prisoners are sentenced to death and executed and where grassroots pressure for a moratorium can have the most im-

act. Our focus on unfairness in how the death penalty is applied has generated new energy and allies for state organizers.

Our goal remains to translate Illinois' imposition of a moratorium in 2000 into a national phenomenon. 2001 was a breakthrough year for advancing the campaign's strategy of driving national momentum for a moratorium by winning victories *state by state*. All total, 19 states considered moratorium legislation in 2001, nearly double the number in 2000.

Our first chance for a win came in January in our home state of MARYLAND. Responding to a ripe political climate, including new leadership from the Senate Majority Leader and the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus, we launched a grassroots mobilization. The coalition included moratorium bill sponsor State Delegate Salima Siler Marriot [D], the Maryland Catholic Conference, Amnesty International, the Maryland Coalition Against State Executions, The Justice Project, and the Campaign to End the Death Penalty.

MORATORIUM Now! mounted a highly effective Maryland campaign (see our accomplishments to the right).

NATIONAL TALLY

View the entire list at
www.quixote.org/ej
or call us at 301-699-0042
to receive your copy by mail.



Our efforts were rewarded in March when *a bill imposing a two-year moratorium passed the Maryland House of Delegates by an 82-54 vote!* The win attracted daily local and national news headlines. Ultimately, de-

mocracy did not prevail. The Senate's widely anticipated vote for a moratorium bill was short-circuited when a handful of Senators filibustered in the last few days of the session to deny a Senate vote.

Maryland Campaign Accomplishments

- ➔ developed and mailed an **action alert** to 25,000 Marylanders.
- ➔ published an **ad in a Sunday edition of *The Sun*** in Baltimore with a readership of nearly a half million people; over 400 Marylanders signed the ad's call for a moratorium, including three U.S. Congressional Representatives, the current and former Mayors of Baltimore, two county executives, filmmaker John Waters, and other prominent residents.
- ➔ **presented a clear and informed message** to the media, the legislature, and the public that helped shape the moratorium debate.
- ➔ contacted approximately **1,000 Quixote Center constituents** in Maryland by phone, and coordinated with Amnesty International's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, which mobilized its state phone tree.
- ➔ coordinated an e-mail group of coalition members and **e-mailed up-to-date action alerts** to hundreds of groups and individuals around the state.

After the legislative session ended in April, the newly unleashed grassroots pressure for a moratorium shifted to the Maryland Governor. Throughout 2001, demands mounted on Governor Glendening to impose a moratorium by executive order, pending completion of his own study of fairness in death sentencing.

An Eye on States

The near victory in Maryland demonstrated a new political strength for the moratorium movement. Grassroots support, which in Maryland included moratorium resolutions adopted by local governments representing the state's three most populous jurisdictions, can indeed be translated into political change! Our Maryland campaign provided us

intensive on-the-ground training which has enriched our organizing staff's capacity to coach, mentor, train, and otherwise assist organizers in other states. In 2001, we provided training to groups in Georgia, Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee.

MORATORIUM NOW! also provided emergency assistance to advocates in NEVADA when its Senate unexpectedly passed a moratorium bill in April. We mobilized Nevadans to support the bill via

phone banking and mailed an urgent action alert. While the moratorium ultimately failed to pass the state Assembly, a study bill was approved. We continue to provide needed technical assistance to the state coalition in its efforts to inform the study commission and prepare for the state's next legislative session in 2003.

Northeast Field Office

In March, we deepened our *long-term commitment to state capacity building* by establishing our first Field Office and hiring Celeste Fitzgerald to run it. She is a talented organizer who emerged from the moratorium movement in New Jersey. Celeste provides technical assistance in organizing, strategic planning, message development, lobbying, and organizational capacity building to a Northeast cluster of state

organizations moving moratorium initiatives in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, New York, and Delaware. At the same time, she brings an extra set of capable hands to state organizing initiatives. She has quickly become a beloved and respected ally and resource for state activists. "Celeste has been an invaluable asset to our work,"

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SAYS JEFF GARIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
PENNSYLVANIA ABOLITIONISTS UNITED AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY.
"SHE IS ACCESSIBLE AND ENTHUSIASTIC."

says Jeff Garis, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Abolitionists United Against the Death Penalty. "She is accessible and enthusiastic. We wouldn't have had such success with our moratorium week in October without her assistance."

In 2002, the Northeast Field Office's priority states will be NEW JERSEY and PENNSYLVANIA, where we are eyeing victories in 2002 and 2003, respectively. Funding permitting, we look to duplicate this regional organizing model in other parts of the country.

National Collaboration

Equal Justice USA cooperates closely with other national organizations via the Ad Hoc Working Group, a national collaborative that includes the ACLU, Amnesty International, the Moratorium Campaign, the Justice



ACTION ALERT ACTION ALERT ACTION ALERT ACTION ALERT

**At any moment, we expect the release
of the 100th innocent person from death row since 1976.**

Across the country, groups are preparing to speak out on this milestone day in an effort to turn attention to the flaws that pervade the death penalty system.

Join us in raising your voice when the 100th innocent person is released.

To get more involved in the moratorium movement in your state, contact us or visit the new STATE BY STATE portion of our website at www.quixote.org/ej. If you have any questions or would like additional organizing materials, don't hesitate to call or write!

Here's what you can do:

- Make sure we have your email address so we can alert you as soon as the 100th person is released.
- Prepare a letter to the editor (sample below) that you can send to your local newspaper as soon as the 100th person is released.
- Urge your friends, co-workers, and family to send their own letters to newspapers and state representatives.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the editor,

This morning, **John Doe** was released after spending ## years on **State's** death row for a crime he didn't commit. **John Doe** is the 100th innocent person to be exonerated from death row since 1976. This is a shameful track record and demonstrates serious flaws in the way our nation is carrying out this irreversible punishment.

This comes when 2,000 groups nationwide have called for a halt to executions, including 63 local governments, state and county bar associations, labor unions, faith communities, businesses, newspapers, and more. (Call us at 301-699-0042 to get an update before you send your letter.)

Your State's legislature should heed the warning of these 100 wrongly convicted and pass a bill calling for a moratorium immediately. It isn't until we step back and study our own application of the death penalty that we can understand the true depth of the inequities in the system and the ways to address them.

Sincerely,
Your Name

** Be sure to include your address and phone number—most newspapers won't print a letter they can't verify by phone.*

March 2002

Dear Friend,

Joyous thanks for all your support and involvement in Equal Justice USA over the years. The attached 2001 Report portrays the collaborative accomplishments of thousands of people just like you.

2002 offers new opportunities to advance a moratorium on executions and to fuel public debate about the fairness and effectiveness of our nation's crime policy. The spring will likely bring the 100th exoneration of a wrongly convicted death row prisoner. Against this backdrop, we will celebrate reaching the 2,000 mark with our National Tally of organizations and faith communities urging a moratorium! This tally includes 63 local governments nationwide.

Already this year, seven executions have been stayed while a mentally ill, juvenile offender in Georgia had his death sentence commuted to life in prison. One stay came from Florida Governor Jeb Bush without any prodding from defense attorneys. In recent months, the U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to review three issues: whether the mentally retarded should be executed, whether a judge, rather than a jury, can impose a death sentence, and the seemingly perennial problem of blacks being excluded from capital juries.

As more stories of inequity in death sentencing become publicly known, the merits for a moratorium become clearer. Last year's near wins in the Maryland House of Delegates and Nevada Senate have fortified our commitment to our movement's frontlines - the states where the vast majority of death sentences are imposed and carried out.

State by State: from the grassroots to the statehouse!

Since we launched our Moratorium Now! campaign in 1997, Equal Justice USA has built solid relationships with organizers on the ground in states around the country. We have learned

a great deal from each other. As a national organization, our challenge is to respond to immediate opportunities to win state legislative and gubernatorial moratoria while continuing to spade future victories. We are providing short-term, direct aid and technical assistance to states most ripe for success – currently New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. We also offer long-term, capacity building support to emerging initiatives, which we have now identified in 14 states.

Our first Field Office, opened in the Northeast last March, is proving to be an effective organizing model. It also demonstrates the commitment Equal Justice USA is making to our state-driven strategy. The first payoff on this investment may come this spring! A bi-partisan moratorium bill is poised to move in the New Jersey State Legislature. The groundwork has been laid. Momentum is swelling. Equal Justice USA Field Organizer Celeste Fitzgerald, a New Jersey resident, is providing vital support. A victory in New Jersey will certainly propel momentum in other states.

Like many grassroots funded organizations, Equal Justice USA faces uncertainties in this post 9-11 period. Yet, the last few years have taught us that generous commitment, hard work, and tireless organizing can turn growing popular support for a moratorium into governing policy. We have faith that many people like you remain committed to this unfinished work. We ask you to renew or extend your support with a gift of \$100 or more. The payoff for fairness, justice, and life could be momentous! We are honored to share it all with you!

Blessings,

Jane Henderson

Ervin Murfree

For the staff and volunteers of Equal Justice USA

MEET THE STAFF MEET THE STAFF MEET THE STAFF

Caleb Eber, Grassroots Organizer/Office Manager. Caleb began his work on criminal justice issues by co-founding a chapter of The Campaign to End the Death Penalty. He is a co-founder of the DC Area Books to Prisons Project and currently serves as its volunteer co-coordinator.

Jane Henderson, Project Coordinator. Jane founded the Equal Justice USA project in 1990. She has become a nationally recognized anti-death penalty and human rights activist. Jane's articles have appeared in scores of publications, including a recent op-ed in *The Washington Post*.

Shari Silberstein, Grassroots Organizer. Shari has worked with many social justice groups, including the Education on Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC); a documentation center for political asylum applicants; a help line for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youth; and numerous films.

Ervin Murfree, Development Coordinator. Ervin brings over nine years of fundraising experience with business associations. He has long been involved in social justice issues, including tutoring prisoners at the Elmira (NY) Correctional Facility and working on international issues.

Claudia Whitman, Volunteer GRIP Coordinator. Claudia has been an activist, writer/editor, and speaker on behalf of prisoner's rights for over 10 years. She has been a contributor and editor for several publications on criminal justice and the death penalty.

Trisha Kendall, Grassroots Organizer/Fundraiser. Trisha served two years with AmeriCorps in community organizing. Her experiences include volunteer management, training development, environmental activism, and building community coalitions.

Celeste Fitzgerald, Northeast Field Organizer. Celeste was instrumental in organizing New Jerseyans for a Death Penalty Moratorium (NJDPM), the state-wide organization spearheading the moratorium campaign. Celeste is sharing her experience with other state groups in the Northeast U.S.

Project, the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, and Death Penalty Information Center. In 2001, we played a key leadership role in moving this group to collaboratively identify states where initiatives for reform, moratoria, and repeal of the death penalty have the most chance of succeeding over the next two years. Our state by state strategy is informed by this collaboration.

Equal Justice USA coordinator Jane Henderson serves on two grantmaking committees of the Death Penalty Mobilization Fund at the Tides Foundation. On a monthly basis, Jane is involved in deciding grants for short-term, timely organizing initiatives that challenge the death penalty at the national, regional, or state level. She also serves on the Fund's bi-annual state strategies grant committee, which, in December 2001, awarded grants of \$35,000 to six state organizations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, North Carolina, Illinois, New Mexico, and Oregon.

Hope for 2002: State by State

In many ways, 2001 was a laboratory year in which state-based moratorium strategies were tested and strengthened. 2002 offers new openings to advance the national movement.

We embark on a multi-year organizing offensive, *State by State: from the grassroots to the statehouse*. The aim is to improve and expand our national efforts to strategically sharpen, capacitate, and resource promising state moratorium initiatives.

Our first opportunity for a 2002 win comes in the spring of this year in the **NEW JERSEY** State Legislature, where a moratorium bill has been introduced with bi-partisan support. Via our Field Office and reinforcements from our national organizing staff, we will provide priority assistance to our state partner, New Jerseyans for a Death Penalty Moratorium, with a push for a victory this year.

At the same time, MORATORIUM NOW! will provide training and technical assistance to over a dozen state initiatives throughout the country, cultivating future moratorium opportunities, state by state by state. We are consolidating our organizing materials into a comprehensive *Legislative Toolkit*, drawing on the experience of state and national organizers around the country.

GrassRoots Investigation Project (GRIP)

Over the years, Equal Justice USA has received thousands of letters from prisoners seeking investigative and legal help with their cases. We have no lawyers on our staff and have often felt ill equipped to help. Then in 2000, Equal Justice USA activist Claudia Whitman came to us with an idea. Through her letters and visits with death row prisoners, she learned that there is helpful casework that non-lawyers can do. Too often in capital cases, a lack of time and money prevents even the most dedicated defense attorneys from conducting thorough investigations. Claudia's dream was to train and support other activists and prisoners' loved ones in doing basic research, documentation, and investigative legwork. Such efforts could both strengthen the legal work of attorneys and inform the public debate for a moratorium on executions. The GrassRoots Investigation Project (GRIP) grew out of this vision.

In 2001, GRIP tested its pioneering organizing model of local "investigative teams," including prisoners' families and friends, community activists, students, and lawyers. Claudia traveled to North Carolina, Philadelphia, northern Alabama, and Georgia to reach out and provide initial training and support to family members looking to take an active role in their loved ones' cases.

As important, GRIP has net-

worked with lawyers and innocence projects at law schools throughout the country, building its reputation as a valuable ally within the movement's legal community. The project's advisory board has grown to include former law enforcement, defense lawyers, prisoners, family members of current and executed prisoners, and anti-death penalty activists. The project often serves as a bridge between prisoners and lawyers by screening prisoner appeals for help and empowering the people closest to a case to do the research and documentation that attracts and supports able counsel. Claudia has made presentations at death penalty conferences and workshops on effective ways for activists and lawyers to work together.

GRIP provides phone support to activists, family members, and lawyers around the country. GRIP also maintains correspondence with over 50 prisoners who contacted Equal Justice USA as a result of the 2000 release of *Reasonable Doubts: Is the U.S. Executing Innocent People?* This inaugurating GRIP report documents the cases of 16 men from seven states who were executed despite compelling claims of innocence. (www.quixote.org/ej)

IN 2002, GRIP will continue its work sparking and supporting local teams. Its first year of organizing is maturing with teams coming together in Alabama and South Carolina. The project plans to test a new training curriculum and to publish an accompanying manual. At the same time,



Claudia will continue to network lawyers with prisoners and their advocates.

Books to Prisons Project

Our volunteer-run DC Area Books to Prisons Project continues to promote literacy and to link people across prison walls. In 2001, the project shipped 1,800 donated books to 400 prisoners around the country. Book to Prisons also produced and marketed the compilation compact disk, *With Literacy and Justice for All*, blending socially conscious punk rock with human rights activism. A com-

panion jacket pamphlet educates listeners about the over-incarceration of minorities, the lack of opportunities for prisoners to educate and rehabilitate themselves, and widespread illiteracy among our nation's two million prisoners. In addition to *educating and involving youth*, the CD's sales are expected to net \$7,500 for the Books Project over the next two years.

IN 2002, Books to Prisons hopes to find a permanent home for its growing library of donated books in order to expand the number of books shipped out by volunteers, and to expand the number of prisoners it serves.



What is Quixote Center?

Equal Justice USA is a program of the Quixote Center – a multi-issue, social justice non-profit whose mission is to join with people with few resources in struggles for justice.

For over 25 years, the Quixote Center has gathered together people of faith and conscience to organize highly effective social justice campaigns. Center programs have educated and mobilized hundreds of thousands of people to stop the U.S. backed war in Central America, to build new models of rural development in Nicaragua, to support democracy and reforestation in Haiti, to promote women's equality and end homophobia in the Roman Catholic Church, and more.

The Quixote Center strives to live its dreams of justice and equality in it's own day-to-day operations. We are a non-hierarchical workplace, earning equal base pay, sharing mundane tasks, and collectively making decisions by consensus. Well over 90% of our funding comes from tens of thousands of generous grassroots people around the U.S. and internationally.



Movement

Gains in 2001

- ❑ Moratorium bills passed the Nevada Senate and the Maryland House of Delegates. A moratorium amendment lost by only 3 votes in the Connecticut House, while Texas bills passed committees in both legislative houses.
- ❑ Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Missouri, and North Carolina enacted legislation banning the execution of the mentally retarded.
- ❑ 17 states improved access to post-conviction DNA testing.
- ❑ Investigative reports examining fairness in death sentencing ran in the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Tennessean*, and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.
- ❑ Oklahoma City police chemist Joyce Gilchrist was fired after an F.B.I. report revealed that her work went “beyond the acceptable limits of forensic science.”
- ❑ The Council of Europe threatened to revoke the United States’ Observer Status if we did not halt executions immediately.
- ❑ Chile, Yugoslavia, and the Ukraine joined the majority of world nations by eliminating executions.
- ❑ Five wrongly convicted death row prisoners were exonerated, bringing the total to 98 since 1973.
- ❑ U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor publicly acknowledged, “the system may well be allowing some innocent defendants to be executed.”

MISSION STATEMENT

Equal Justice USA is a grassroots project that mobilizes and educates ordinary citizens around issues of crime and punishment in the U.S. Our work brings into public focus the racial, economic, and political biases that permeate our legal system. By transforming our culture of vengeance and violence, we build support for an alternative public policy that is both effective and humane.

FUNDERS

Equal Justice USA is funded by thousands of individuals as well as:

Agape Foundation
Arca Foundation
Church of St John Neumann
Cowles Charitable Trust
Dominican Sisters of Springfield
Edna Wardlaw Charitable Trust
Funding Exchange
Mary Alphonse Bradley Fund
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School Sisters of Notre Dame
Sharing Fund
SC Ministry Foundation
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Sisters of St. Francis (TOSF)
Social Justice Fund
Sisters of St. Francis (Tiffin, OH)
Tides Foundation
Winds of Peace Foundation



Equal Justice USA was instrumental in 2001
in pushing forward the debate for a
moratorium in the United States.

Help us continue
bringing the call to legislative
houses across the country, state by state!

Save a Stamp! Donate online at www.quixote.org/ej/ejusaform.html

___ Enclosed is a donation of: \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 other _____
(Tax-deductible gifts payable to Equal Justice USA/Quixote Center)

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send me an organizing packet I will take a resolution to my city council



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www.quixote.org/ej

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Insert
this card
and your donation
today
to forward the
momentum we've built
together for a halt to executions!