

## What Kind of State Are We?

by: [Aldon Hynes](#)

Thu May 28, 2009 at 16:59:14 PM EDT

*(I attended the press conference today and I'll add my video to this post later... - promoted by ctblogger)*



*Randy Steidl is introduced by Attorney Edward J Gavin, President of the Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. Steidl, Gavin, and lawyers called on Gov Rell to abolish the death penalty at a press conference at the State Capitol today. Photo by ctblogger*

Hartford - Thursday afternoon, the Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association held a press conference with Sister Helen Prejean, author of the book *Dead Man Walking*, and Randy Steidl, the 123rd Death Row Exonerée. Many of the standard points about what is wrong with the Death Penalty were raised. It doesn't work.

It risks the lives of innocent people. It is not an effective deterrent. It is too expensive. It is unevenly applied. There is racial, economic and geographic disparities in how it is applied. It is applied with impermissible arbitrariness. Yet the real question is, what kind of a State are we?

Mr. Steidl talked about how less than one per cent of murderers are given the death penalty and how it is nothing but revenge. Revenge is a hate crime, and we have laws against hate crimes in our country. He called on Americans to wake up. This isn't Russia, China, or Afghanistan. This is the United States of America. We are better than that.

Sister Helen Prejean brought the message even more closely home. She lives in Louisiana. She noted that 80% of the executions in the United States come from former slave states, but that Connecticut isn't a state driven by vengeance and hatred. She applauded the wisdom of our legislators and challenged the Governor to embrace the same wisdom.

She spoke about seeing hurting families and thinking about those who have been hurt and will be hurt. She asked if we really wanted to imitate the behavior of a killer by killing those who have hurt us.

She talked about attending executions and seeing the mother of the murderer putting her hand against the glass and watching as her son is killed by the state.

Michael Fitzpatrick, Past President of CCTLA, suggested it is wrong to believe that the official taking of a life is necessary for healing of victims. In fact, Mr. Steidl noted that the twelve years of hearings that a typical death penalty entails in Illinois constantly reopens the wounds of victims.

Also, talking about victims, Mr. Steidl noted that in Illinois, the average cost of trials for a person on death row is

\$3.5 million. Whereas life in prison costs about half a million dollars. That extra three million dollars would be better spent returned to the taxpayers, or if we are really concerned about the victims, in victim services. When it came time for question from the press, Ken Dixon of the Connecticut Post asked about the recent Quinnipiac poll which found that most people in Connecticut supported the death penalty. In response, it was pointed out that 25% of the people claimed to support the death penalty because it was less expensive, which is factually incorrect.

Mr. Dixon pressed his question asking, doesn't it show that the people are on Rell's side? Instead, it shows that most of the people simply uninformed, and hopefully, Governor Rell will not make her decision on a similar level of being uninformed. The more interesting question is why are the people of Connecticut uninformed? Do members of the traditional media, like Mr. Dixon, have some culpability the lack of information being available to the people of Connecticut?

More importantly, what is Governor Rell doing to learn more about this important issue? When will she meet with the families of victims that oppose the death penalty? Was her hastily scheduled press conference half an hour before the CCTLA press conference anything more than a "LaLaLaLa, I can't hear you" press conference? We need leaders in our state. We need Governor Rell to be courageous and sign the bill that would abolish the Death Penalty in Connecticut. We need reporters like Mr. Dixon to tell the whole story about the death penalty in Connecticut. We need each and every person who has thought and prayed hard about what sort of State Connecticut is going to be, to contact Governor Rell and urge her to become informed.

Randy Steidl, a devote Catholic and conservative Republican summed it up saying, "The death penalty in this country is antiquated and wrong." Mr. Fitzpatrick noted our heritage as a state. "Constitution state not founded on fear or retribution."

### COMMENTS ATTACHED TO THIS STORY

#### **death penalty** (0.00 / 0)

a death penalty never kept anyone from committing the murder. murderers do not believe they'll be caught. as stated, convicted murderers have been found not-guilty too late to save their lives. the public needs more information on this to understand the appeals cost Connecticut taxpayers much more than life without opportunity for parole. inmates should be doing some work that helps pay for their room and board. i know there are a few businesses that they work in. we need more ideas to put them into work that will benefit the state and defray our cost to contain them. if it is wrong to kill, then Connecticut should not be killing.

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by: *retired yes @ Thu May 28, 2009 at 19:46:42 PM CDT*

#### **I was there . . .** (0.00 / 0)

and I could not listen to Mr. Steidl's comments without tears. There are far too many people sentenced to death row who have been found innocent. Connecticut should not be a state of revenge killing. Life in prison without possibility of release is a far more sane approach to even the most heinous crimes.

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by: *Kim Hynes @ Fri May 29, 2009 at 06:29:24 AM CDT*

#### **We are a forgiving, compassionate people** (0.00 / 0)

That's who we are Aldon. Our leaders seem to think otherwise, but then again, our job as progressives is to show Gov. Rell, Sen. Williams or Speaker Donovan where they should lead us to. Thanks for the excellent post. End the barbaric death penalty.

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by: *ken\_krayeske @ Fri May 29, 2009 at 12:49:15 PM CDT*