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SR. HELEN PREJEAN EDUCATIONAL FORUM

DEAD MAN WALKING
THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

ST. MARGARET OF SCOTLAND
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Introduction

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

I am very grateful for your very warm welcome for me this afternoon. Thank you for that. And really, of course, I don't have to introduce Sr. Helen. Many of us here were probably present at the premier of the opera, *Dead Man Walking* that occurred in Detroit here a few years ago; and Sr. Helen has been here on a number of occasions. Perhaps you were present to hear her; or perhaps you heard her at Call to Action, when she gave the keynote talk there a few years ago.

But even though I don't have to introduce her, it is certainly an honor to be the one to be asked to present Sr. Helen to you this afternoon. I consider her a very dear friend; and so I am pleased that I have been asked to present her. But just in case you are not aware, she is a sister of the Congregation of St. Joseph and served in educational work in the diocese of New Orleans for twenty-four years. She was a junior high school teacher. But then, she undertook a dramatic change in her life. She decided then to really be someone in the service of the poor, which she felt was needed for all of us who follow Jesus. She moved into a housing project in New Orleans and began not only to work for the poor, but to experience the way of the poor, and what was happening to the poor in New Orleans, and throughout our country, of course, and more direly, throughout the world.

But while she was there, living in that housing project, a year or two after she began to live there, she was asked to correspond with a death row inmate. And I'm sure your all know what happened after that. She wrote back and forth to Patrick Sonnier on many occasions, but then went to visit him. And he, at first, was not very happy to see her, you may recall; but grew in a depth of appreciation for her. And she became his spiritual director, and guided him spiritually until the day she walked with him to the death chamber. And, of course, she did that with a second prisoner, Robert Willie, and subsequently has ministered to many people on death row.

She wrote an account of her spiritual journey with Patrick Sonnier in the book, *Dead Man Walking*, which became a best seller in the United States and throughout the world. She also, as you may also remember, began to be very concerned about the families of victims, because, at first, she was not very welcomed by those victims' families when they thought she was being so open, loving and caring for the perpetrators of some horrendous crimes. And so her work was extended to the families of victims. And with great compassion and love, she continues to serve them.

She campaigned against the death penalty without ceasing. She's constantly trying to bring about an end that brutal form of killing, that we are one of the few developed nations continue to carry out. She has organized her work through the Death Penalty Discourse Center. It's the moratorium campaign in Dead Man Walking Project, located in the home in New Orleans.

She has been honored in many ways: honorary degrees from universities all over the world, and numerous awards. She continues to live in New Orleans and to carry on most of her work from her home base there.

She has lectured or continues to lecture about 120 times a year; so she is constantly on the road, bringing her message of love and compassion for death penalty prisoners.. And so we are very grateful that we today are among the people who benefit from those 120 lectures that she delivers throughout our country. And so, I am very honored to present to you Sr. Helen Prejean. (Applause)

Dead Man Walking: the Journey Continues

Sr. Helen Prejean

You know why I am here? Because Bishop Gumbleton called (laughter). And there are some summons that you know when you get, you just want to do. And I heard a little rumor about these Elephants; and it was lovely to talk to Gerry (Fr. Gerry Bechard) on the way here telling me the story. Sometimes, you just get up, and you ask a question, and you become a catalyst, and discourse that happens afterwards in the gathering of community. So, I hardly know where to start, in a way; but anyway you all just picture: I've got two big bags here, and it's filled with stories. And I never write what I'm gonna say, because the presence with people is what kinda draws it out.

I want you to know that I am presently engaged in writing the prequel to *Dead Man Walking*. It's the spiritual journey that brought me to death row. It was the awakening to the gospel that called me finally, 'cause I was really a late bloomer. I'll tell you a little more about that. But this is how I'm going to begin the book. It's called *River of Fire: Spiritual Journey to Death Row*. One little aside: the media would often ask me, "What are you, a nun, doing on death row?" And I said, "Well, you know, it's the awkward mobility of the gospel of Jesus." (Laugher) But they didn't get that about the awkward mobility; so I stopped saying that to the media; but everybody in here knows about awkward mobility – you know, if you're not banned by somebody or whatever. So we want to talk about the heart of it is to keep our heart on the prize, and for us in our lives concretely, to follow what Jesus calls us to be and to do. And here's how I will begin the book with this preamble:

> *"They killed a man with fire one night. Strapped him in an oaken chair and pumped electricity into his body. His killing was a legal act because he had killed. No religious leaders protested the killing. But I was there. I saw it with my own eyes; and what I saw set my soul on fire, a fire that burns in me still. Here is an account of my soul's journey to the killing chamber that night and the spiritual currents that pulled me there."*

And so it begins. It begins with religious life in the late fifties before Vatican II, when we were dressed like widows of the seventeenth century (laughter), which stopped for a couple hundred years. And the irony is, the real reason we dressed that way is, because widows were the only ones who could go out on the streets of France unaccompanied by a man. It gave the women the freedom to go to the people; and that was what the dress meant originally; and that is just the beginning.

And also – really trying to be holy, you know – I had read about Teresa of Avila, The Little Flower; and we had acts of humility, this is, all behind the cloister; see, because the lay people couldn't get in there, because you want to get away from the world; you want to be holy, and acts of humility. So the book actually opens with my kneel'n at the front door of the dining room and kissing the foot of each sister as she came in, because I was trying to get a little humility. And you had these acts that you could do see. So I kissed a lot of feet that night, and all in trying to be holy, and be a saint, and to follow Jesus. And then, I was a bride of Christ, and I'm gonna make vows, and I would get merit for everything I did – watering a plant in a pot – all because of the virtue of religion, because I was a vowed religious. I could eat, and it would be an act of religion. Everything I did was an act of religion, which meant extra merit. And then it was the huge banking system: we would get indulgences, and get merit, and, so I thought, that was a pretty good deal. When we awaken, it is always grace. Enlightenment is always a gift which we never get for ourselves.

And I want to back up a little bit here, and then I want to take you into the inner journey, and then take you where it's led me recently, in terms of taking on some of the issues that are voiced most cogently by Justice Antonin Scalia's – one of the Catholics on the Supreme Court – approach to jurisprudence, and also approach to the way we interpret the gospel of Jesus. I just want to say first the importance of discourse. In any social movement, and within the Church, within the Body of Jesus, dialogue and discourse is what makes change happen; and when we begin in discourse to raise issues that are not accepted yet, and we can think of them. This clearly for me: The Death Penalty was accepted by everybody when I first started on death row, and had witnessed this man killed in the electric chair. You know, I couldn't get anybody, you know. I did meet a good – you know, you have to find your bishops, you know, who can stand up on this, you know. But I was pretty much alone. My community had made the journey, and it was just like I was getting involved in this and I was, like, way out ahead of the pack. But you know what your eyes see, and it is really the sufferin' that is the transformative thing, because I was with that man. I was with him in the last three days in that death house. I was visiting with his mom and with his brother; and I'm there with him when they take him and they kill him. And what our eyes see, and it has to come out of our direct witness, our direct action; and that's what gives us the consistency and the fidelity, because we know what we've seen. We know the suffering. And it is the suffering that holds us. And it is the suffering that puts us in touch with our cushions, and our gifts, and our privilege, and our protections that we have that other people don't have. And that is the transformative power.

But the importance of the discourse, the importance of what Paul said: "We speak in season and out of season;" and it's the stay true to the truth. And so for me it was – I have watched this man be killed and in the process I've spoken to the guards who have to do the killing. And in the process, I have spoken with the governor, doin' his political thing around this issue. And I've spoken to members of the legislature. I've seen how politics works to hold it in place. And then, over the last 20 years, I have spoken to the people, and heard the people, and can read the heart of the American people. When I go to Europe, and places like that, they always say, "What is it about the American people that makes then hang on to vengeance like this? Why are you still practicing the death penalty?" And what I have found in the American public is not that they're wedded to the death penalty, like they've had a long thorough thought process, reflection and said, "Yes! I'm for the government killing people." They haven't thought about it at all. We live in a very, drift oriented culture; people move from one thing to the other. People get sound bites about the news. There's no deep reflection at all going on about it.

And I have been surprised that when you bring people through the journey, they get it; it's not a hard sell. I mean, just two days ago at Drury University, that was founded by an abolitionist back in eighteen seventy something, women went to college, and after a few years, black people were allowed to go to the college – and this is in 1873. You always have those people who awaken and then act in fidelity. And so, there are all these kids; they were packed into the auditorium. Packed! They were sitting on the steps, and they were in another room. Why are they in there? What are they coming to hear? Well now, the movie does help (laughter). And I want to say that about the discourse. To get the discourse out – you know I'm glad they're doing that little movie about you, Bishop Gumbleton that is going to be coming on PBS, a little movie. Get it out there. It'll start in the Detroit area; and then, just by virtue of demand, it'll spread around the United States and Europe. It's going to help transform everybody...The story of Tom Gumbleton – I mean, I know him playing it up, and he's a little embarrassed (laughter), but here's the thing: the arts are extremely important when we need to bring people close to an issue they will not otherwise experience.

I didn't know the power of a book. I didn't know the intimacy of a book. I didn't know that when you read a book it's like being in a cloister, 'cause you don't have to debate with anybody when you're reading and getting information; and the intimacy comes from using your imagination; and you're going there; and instinctively – I wasn't an English major – but instinctively, when I wrote *Dead Man Walking,* in the first person present tense to take people there. "Now I'm walking in the death house for the first time. Now they're bringing him. I'm shocked at his face. I thought he would look mean. He looks like a human being. He's smiling and he's saying, 'Thank you ma'm for comin' to see me.' I thought anybody on death row would look mean. I mean, he's in there for murder. Don't murderers, don't they look different? Don't they have that evil in them? And can't you tell it from the set of their jaw and the look in their eye – you

know, those people are not human like the rest of us." And so through writing, bringing people into a very intimate journey, because when we use our own imaginations, when we read a book, that's about as intimate as it gets. But then the film; I wasn't looking for a film to be made in *Dead Man Walking*. In fact, all of my nuns in St.Thomas were saying, "Helen, don't let Hollywood touch that book, because it's you and a death row inmate; and you know what Hollywood is gonna do with that story. They're going to have you eloping in a helicopter (much laughter)." And so I was wary. But see, I love this quote from Goethe: "When we do, when we pursue a course that is righteous, providence moves for us, and resources make their way to us."

So when the book gets done, and there it goes where it wants to go. A book is like a child, has legs, goes where it wants to go. *Dead Man Walking* wanted to go into the lap of Susan Sarandon. I have some men friends that envied the book. But she's doing the film *The Client* in Memphis; and she's reading *Dead Man Walking.* I'm in New Orleans, and just taking things a step at a time, and she was the one who called me. And I had heard about her from Amnesty International, that she was great about human rights; that's all I knew about her. I had never laid my eyes on her. So I had to rent *Thelma and Louise* to see what she looked like (laughter), because we go to a restaurant. I don't know movie stars. I mean I don't know her 'cause we went to the Bonteau Restaurant to have some good Cajun food – I mean you always get the food straight first when you come to New Orleans, right Bishop Gumbleton? And I don't want to be the only lady who walks in the restaurant and don't know her, so I rented *Thelma and Louise*; got her mixed up with Geena Davis –I mean the whole movie – the whole movie. I'm thinking, "Oh I like Louise, that's the sizzle one, 'cause Geena Davis is itsy, and doing all these stupid things, and gets in more and more trouble. So when Susan walks into the Banteau, and I said, "Thank you, Jesus!" I was so relieved (much laughter) when she was Louise in this movie.

Now you call this starting out from scratch. I don't know anything about movies; but passionate people who care was Susan Sarandon; and so it a just two women sitting at a table and eating crawfish etouffee and talking about making a movie. She knew what she was talking about. I didn't know what she was talking about; but she was the one who believed in it. And she said, "I know who needs to do it. I know who should do this film – Tim Robbins." So I gotta go rent another movie (laughter) with Tim Robbins. So I rented *Bull Durham*, 'cause you know it had both of them together and she couldn't get Tim to read the book; he was working on another project – I mean, just a little thing about Tim Robbins: for over 20 years he's been trying to work on a Jesus movie, 'cause he wants to take on right-wing Christianity. And his movies never come to birth; that's what he was working on then.

She couldn't get him to read the book, and then, finally, nine months later – and I didn't have any expectations from this at all – she'd periodically call and say, "I know if I could get him to read the book…" And I'd go, "You know time, Susan, it doesn't matter." She said, "It does matter. Time does matter." And they're walking down the streets of New York, and she takes him by the arm, and she burst into tears, out in public, and says, "Tim, if we're not going to make a film with that book, we need to turn the book over to somebody who will." She knew we needed a new kind of film in the United States to bring people into a much deeper journey on the death penalty. Most of the death penalty films were: if it was decided the person was guilty, they were executed, and that was the end of the story. But to really – and the way Tim constructed this film – is also the construction of the book, which I did with the wonderful editor, who was by my side when I wrote *Dead Man Walking;* and he said, "If you don't talk about the crime in the first ten pages of this book, nobody is going to read this book, because they are going to think you, as a Catholic nun, spiritual advisor, think you are overly sympathetic, and you're not going to be really outraged by the crime he did, 'cause you're going to be so in his court. So you got to talk about the crime in the first ten pages of your book."

And then later I heard, when William Faulkner got the Nobel Prize for literature, in his acceptance speech he said, "The only thing worth writing about is the human heart in conflict with itself." Both arms of the cross stretching out where only reconciliation and the deepest spiritual values are going to be able to bring those two poles together. Here's murder victims suffering over here; here's the man over here, the pariah who gets a thousand signals a day. He's nothing but disposable waste, so horrible that he can be disposed of, must be disposed of by society so society can carry on. He must be extinguished. He must be killed. And I end up between these two poles.

And if you know something about the journey, not without making a terrible mistake first of not reaching over to the murder victims family, because I thought they would never want to see me, because I'm the spiritual advisor to the two people who killed their kids. And see, I made assumptions; and it was also cowardice, because I was scared – I mean, I'd never ventured into these kinds of water before; I'm so appalled of the terrible things that can happen to people. Like these two teenage kids went to a Catholic football game on a Friday night in November, and their parents never saw them alive again. And they're found with bullet holes in the backs of their heads, so that Floyd, the father of David could not for years, when he went to Mass on Sunday, sit behind teenage kids, because he couldn't look at the back of their heads. And I am descending into all of this sorrow; and, you know, I'm out of my depth. I'd never dealt with such sorrow, such evil, such ordinary people waking up on an ordinary day; and by the end of the day, their lives are not the same anymore. And I protected Gus, Meg and Louis Prejean, mommy and daddy cuddled, and held, and loved, and my brother and sister, and traveling in the family station wagon for six weeks every summer, going all around the United States, and all around Canada and Europe.

I have no idea, and even the suffering going on in my back yard in the St. Thomas housing projects, where African American people live, and shot, and killed each other, and had drugs going, and were dying in the public schools, and couldn't read; and I knew nothing about it. And in fact, my whole concept of Jesus was to be charitable to everybody I was with; and we had learned this kind of spiritual principle that as long as you did something for the love of God, it didn't matter what you did. I mean, *The Little Flower* spirituality was in me. If you were sweeping the floor, if you were washing the dishes, no matter what you did, it could all be pleasing to God, if you did it with great love. So your actions don't matter? And I was in that: my actions don't matter. If I am with the kids at St. Francis Cabrini…now it's true about loving everybody you're with, but that our actions don't matter? So it doesn't matter whether you act for justice or not? That's partly what took me a while to wake up.

And I just want to say about the discourse, before we get deeply into the journey part. It is the importance of it. And that what we do is, we put our little bit out there. And the important thing in the spiritual life, you know, all the people like Martin Luther King, people like Gandhi, people like Mother Teresa, people like Dan Berrigan, and John Dear, and Thomas Gumbleton, that we know, is that you stand there; and you got to stand in the truth, and you let the chips fall where they will; but you know you have to be faithful to what your eyes have seen, and the suffering that you know is in this, and that you've got to take it step by step. And that's what you know you have to do. And the principle in the spiritual life: we do what we do for fidelity and integrity, and do not seek the fruits. The fruits are left up to others. But we stand there, and that's what I did with this: the witnessing of Pat's death and the others, and then the moving over to the murder victims family, and writing the story; and then the book comes out, books given, we're going to have this film made. And then, when Tim Robbins finally read the book, he got it. See and you're utterly dependent on principled impassioned people who care about the issue catching the spark. I'm not in control of any of that. I'm not the one who goes and sits down with Tim Robbins and Susan says, "Let me tell you why the death penalty is really wrong, why we gotta have a movie."

You know, have you ever had the experience where you're shakin' bushes, and shakin' the bushes, and you're squeezin' that turnip, and you're squeezin' that turnip, and you're trying to get an effect out of it, and nothing comes of it? You must've had that experience. I had, when I taught CCD to public high school students in Cabrini (laughter). Who's squeezed a turnip? If you ever squeezed a turnip, raise your hand. And they don't want to come to class, and they don't care about the religion we were teaching anyway; and it was like, I had a lot of experiences with failure in that. I mean, I was creative like you wouldn't believe. We did things in our heads; we went out to the woods; we built our own little building – try to get those kids so they'd come to religion class. Now when I look back and I see, you know, what I was teaching them, I mean, I understand (Laughter). But we are, where we are, when we're there. God wakes us up. The Spirit hits like the pedals of a rose unfurling. We unfurl in the Holy Spirit of God, when it's time for us to wake up; and I'm real clear about that. But you got to leave the fruits.

So they said we're going to have a film, and we're going to have a film, and it's coming down, and we're checking out Angola. He's got a little video camera, and he's going to where I grew up, coming into

St. Thomas, and then just seein' where we are, and all; and how they're gonna to do the filming, and bring in the neighborhood people, because often people go in and make films and the neighborhood people are never consulted, and they never get anything from it.

Tim very respectful meeting with the people of St. Thomas, and everybody has ideas about the film. It was a hoping meeting we had at Hope House and, "Hey! Can I be this? Can I be this?" and all the kids running onto the camera – when you had to shoot the first scene 17 times, just so Susan walking through The St. Thomas Housing projects, because the kids would come in front of the camera, and go like this (laughter). So we finally got people stationed, giving each a quarter so they don't come in front of the camera; and then Tim would say, "Put 'em in the movie! Put 'em in the movie." The cast is growing, because it's their one moment, I mean, to be in a film. There was such excitement in the neighborhood. And then the film comes out.

And the film was a miracle, you know, when Tim was doing the editing, I said, "Tim, how are we going to get people to come see this movie, 'cause this is a heavy journey. I mean, you know, you're taking people into the death penalty, taking them into the suffering of the murder victims." He said, "Well, we're banking on some Academy Award nominations." I said, "Well, Tim, that's a long shot." He said, "Helen, the whole movie is a long shot." (Laughter) And on the feast of the Annunciation, during the Academy Awards, and Susan gets the Academy Award. One point three billion people were watching. It was the feast of the Annunciation. All I could think of was Jesus and the house top thing; and we knew it was a big housetop we were on: one point three billion people in the world watching; and the film was given over to the world. And it took a book by a Catholic nun on the death penalty, and bumped it up on the New York Times best seller list for 31 weeks. Is that not a miracle? Is that not like God? (Applause)

And so the film happened, and so then, the opera happened, which is opening tonight in South Africa – the Opera of *Dead Man Walking* – and see, they are having a lot of struggles in South Africa, 'cause the crime is so rampart, and people are calling for the death penalty again in South Africa. The first act of their new constitutional court after apartheid, the first act was to do away with the death penalty, because every Friday morning at 6:30 they would hang six to twelve people: you, by guilt, by association, if anybody even stood in a crowd where something happened. And there are the mothers out outside there, as they are hanging their son, and sometimes their daughter. Every Friday morning, at 6:30 in the morning, the hangings would take place behind the jail walls. You couldn't see, but everybody knew.

In Japan, when the death penalty happens, they had no clear process. So you could be the last one onto death row, but if a guard, a certain one, comes to your cell by 10:00 in the morning, you could be the last one on, and you're going to be the first one out to be hanged. And they come to your cell. They take you away; they hang you; and two weeks later the parents get a letter saying the separation has happened. So one of the lawyers, working with the death row inmates and defending clients on death row, says, "When you awake in the morning, every morning, it could be the day of your death. Everyone awakens with dread, and you wait for 10:00; and if nothing has happened then you kind of settle into your day by the time lunch is served; the mood is a little lighter. Move into the afternoon, and then go into the night, and pray that the night never ends." They just got a new minister of justice in Japan, because, you know, they've had a change of government. It's kind of like our Obama moment in a sense, and the new Minister of Justice has made it very clear that she is not for the death penalty. So that means everybody on death row for now is safe, 'cause it is solely up to the Minister of Justice to decide who goes next.

And so what I want to say about the discourse: the discourse is very important, and the arts are very important, to get our issue what we need to bring people into the deeper journey. And the death penalty is such a secret ritual, attended to by only a few people; and then, no one from the state can speak to the media. Those press conferences that happen after an execution are the most canned events you can imagine – only certain spokesmen, and they always go through the same formula:

- What the crime was.
- Was the murder victim's family there?
- Did they make any statements?

- What was the last meal?
- What were the person's last words?

And the press falls into it. They all buy into the formula and that is what the public gets after an execution.

Discourse – waking people up, getting the issue out on the streets and to the people; and we need the arts to do that. So in every creative way, like Tim has written the play of *Dead Man Walking* for schools, for universities, and for high schools, 'cause there's nothing like drama to bring people close; and I mean this is kids taking on some pretty heavy duty drama. It's constructed just like the film of *Dead Man Walking*.

- So here are university students and even high school kids being the mother of somebody who's lost their daughter to a terrible crime;
- Or here they are, the guards who are attending and who are part of the strap down team;
- Or here they are, the one who's on death row;
- Or here they are, all in it and bringing people along with them, because they're bringing them close.

And Tim made it clear that in the movie of *Dead Man Walking,* and also the play, one could be a question of innocence. And he said, "We know we shouldn't execute innocent people. The person needs to be guilty and the people know they're guilty." The opera opens with the crime. The prologue, as we watch, as two innocent people, two beautiful people, a couple, is brutally killed at the hands of others, and everything then unfurls from that prologue where we saw that crime. In front of our eyes; and we know who did it, and we don't like him. He's not remorseful, and there's a part in the audience that's dealing with their own hearts like – he deserves it – well, if anybody deserves the death penalty, he deserves the death penalty. And you hear people always talking about this designer death penalty, including our president, at this point, President Obama; here's the designer death penalty. Well it's only for those who we really know are guilty; and they're guilty of very, very heinous crime; and the full outrage of the community needs to be able to be expressed. This is how President Obama is right now on the death penalty; he said it all through the campaign: "Know they're guilty, heinous crime, and the full outrage of the community needs to be able to be expressed."

And the reason, I think, it would only be a five minute conversation with President Obama is because I'd say, "Well, President Obama, have you noticed when people of color are killed there never seems to be full outrage of the community to ask for the ultimate penalty?" Ninety percent of all the murders that happen in New Orleans are usually black on black, or now black on Mexican Americans, because we have Mexican Americans, Hispanic people, Latinos that are in the city helping with reconstruction; and you never hear a prosecutor say they are going to go for the ultimate penalty. Fifty percent of all the homicides in this country are against people of color; and it's very seldom that you ever hear that the death penalty will be pursued. Have you noticed that the full outrage of the community is almost always – look on death row; look at the executions that have happened; eighty percent, because white people were killed? It almost seems to be the opening qualifier that the victim has had enough status that it can provoke outrage of the community, so that you seek the ultimate penalty. What full outrage? For which people? And it isn't just race; it's class. Can you picture a prosecutor in any city: "Ladies and gentlemen. A very valuable person, who is homeless, was murdered last night, and we are going to seek the ultimate penalty." It is such a lottery, and it is so weighted with all of our biases and prejudices that there are only some people who count. And you got to count in this society to evoke full outrage, so that they seek the ultimate penalty – years and years and years of appeals to seek an ultimate penalty of a death sentence. Who dies?

The discourse and how do we get to the discourse? And for me it happened when I came out of that execution chamber. It was the middle of the night. It happened after midnight behind prison walls. And I threw up. I had never watched a human being killed in front of my eyes before. It wasn't at all like somebody being in the hospital who's dying and they are fading. They're consciousness is coming and going. They're not eating. They're not talking. They're fading. You see them slipping away. But here's a man who's talking to you the way I'm talking to you right now; and he's drinking coffee; and he's talking

to you; and you're putting your hand up against that screen; and you're praying together; and he's saying, "Sister, just pray that God holds up my legs. Just pray God holds up my legs when I make that walk." And you have the script in your mind; you only know with your mind, and watch what's going to happen. And they walk him from here by the candle, and walk him over behind the organ over there, and he disappears through those doors, and he's dead. They kill him. It's a corpse they bring out afterwards. They have the body bag ready; and they have the ambulance; and they're going to take out a corpse. They're going to kill him. And I couldn't get my mind around it. It's so shocking!

When we were doing the film; Susan Sarandon kept saying "This is so surreal." And it is because there's a politeness in the death house. The tiles are polished. The coffee pot is percolate'n. The prison psychiatrist is coming up to Patrick, just saying, "Do you need anything? You want a valium?" They just want him to go quietly. In Virginia they don't give you a choice. They give you a shot of valium, whether you want it or not, because they know that fear kind of constricts the veins, and they want you to be relaxed, so they can get that injection, so you don't have a Romell Broom incident happening.

I was just in Cleveland two weeks ago and they were trying to kill Romell Broom in Ohio; and here the technicians – you can't have doctors directly in there – so they have these technicians; and they are trying to find a vein; and they poke him, stab him 18 times; and they can't find a vein; and finally, Romell Broom himself with his head in his hands and crying, he's losing his composure, it went on for hours; and they took a coffee break, because they can't find a vein. And finally, he's trying to help them; he's going, "Look! Maybe here; maybe here." And they couldn't do it; so the Governor says, "We'll give a reprieve for one week." One week and what's the man waiting for? In a week they're going to try again. And see doctors can't be directly involved in executions. The American Medical Association has said that if a doctor participates in any way, giving advice of the chemical mixture, or a technique of how to find a vein that it is against their Hippocratic Oath.

And one means of fighting the death penalty, and eliminating it, is to do what North Carolina did. Their Medical Ethics Board of North Carolina sent a letter saying, "Anybody in the health profession, who directly participates in an execution, is going to lose their medical license." And they shut them down dead or alive, whatever you wanna say. But it's halted executions in North Carolina. So how can we duplicate that? How can we get the Medical Ethics Boards to be able to say to the doctors and put teeth in it: if you participate in this you lose your license?

And there's such collaboration between the professional groups in a society when you have something like the death penalty; and it goes on whenever you have death at the hands of government. So you have, unofficially, doctors on the side, like Louisiana. They don't give out any information about who helped them, who the technicians are. They keep all the people anonymous; and all that's going on; and the death is so masked. It's like: we don't want to see blood. You know, when they shot Gary Gilmore; and they sat him in a chair, and put a little red heart; and then you have the riflemen there, one with a blank, so you don't know who's doin' it. How come we don't want to know who's doing it? Why can't we just say, "Yeah, I shot the bullet that killed a man; it was legal!"

Do you want to know what they put on the death certificate? Cause of death after an execution, it's the only time the truth is told. Even the word execution is a euphemism. Quarterbacks execute passes; businessmen execute plans; execute a human being: it means we are killin' 'em. So why do we have to put on the death certificate cause of death? Be creative! What would you put? Cardiac arrest? Failure to breathe? They have to say it. It's called homicide; the killing of a human being by other human beings. Now they may put "legal" in front of it. Texas said, "It's homicide because of legal execution. We don't want 'em to be seen as victims." They put all that on that death certificate. They got to make sure they cover it with legalese. But the masking of death – you can't have blood – the blood dripped from Gary Gilmore below the chair that he was sitting in; you shoot someone in the heart they are going to bleed. No, we don't want any sign of blood.

The gas chamber was so horrible that the guards participating in it – because you see a person suffocating and then every now and then you have these flukes – God, you don't wanna have flukes; you want it to go without a hitch. Leanderess Riley's a very small man. This happened at San Quentin. And

he got his hands out from the straps because he was so thin, undid the buckles, unstrapped his waist as the gas is beginning to come and he's up against that thick glass door, and banging on it saying, "I don't wanna die. I don't wanna die. I don't wanna die." And looking in the eyes of the guards and the horrified people that are watching this, where it was suppose to go so smoothly, and you have him sitting in the chair, and he just kinda fades away. And no guard that was ever present at the Leanderess Riley killing could ever be part of the team again. You don't wanna have this stuff happening. You want it to be quiet like they are just going to sleep.

I end the book *of Death of Innocence* with David Dawson. I know Marshall Dianne. I know his attorney didn't know he was going to do this, this was North Carolina. You had a choice. You could die in the gas chamber. You could die by lethal injection. And David Dawson said, "I want 'em to see they're killing a man." He chose the gas. He chose it. And then if you want to go quickly, what you do is just take big gulps of the gas, which is the same kind of gas they used in the concentration camps in Germany. You take big gulps so it's over as quickly as you can do it. But David Dawson only took small breaths, and said over, and over, and over again, "I am a human being. I am a human being." And then, the gas began to get to him, and he's choking, and drooling, and, you know, just the bodily liquids are not under his control. "I am a human… " and the gas gets him.

And what makes the death penalty possible? And I want to say by extension what makes the continuance of poverty possible, what makes the continuance up to this time of 40 million people without health care possible, is we don't see the suffering. We live in a terrarium so segmented from each other that we are not brought directly into the arenas of suffering. And we don't see the 40 thousand people who die, 'cause they didn't have medical insurance; and they couldn't get the medical help they needed to deal with the heart problem, or deal with the kidney problem,, or to deal with the brain tumor, or to deal with whatever they had wrong with them, because they didn't have health insurance. And we don't see the people dying. And if we don't see the suffering, then we can't be transformed by it. And get in there on this issue, calling our Senators as though it were our son, or our mother, or ourselves. That identification with suffering humanity, that's Jesus. That's the heart of what the Christian message is all about. I AM you. You are suffering, and I am suffering with you. And what makes the death penalty possible is a switch we turn in our heads. Politicians help us turn the switch. Just being busy in our everyday lives, and not thinking about this, helps us turn the switch. You know, "Sorry," I mean, "you know, it's a tough thing." And the people who say that they're not really human the way we're human. And when we think like that, we can do anything to each other. Societies can do anything to each other.

And I want to take you – I might as well do it here – I've got these little bags of stories, but while we're on this trail, I want to follow it. I believe the reason Abu Ghraib happened, and the reason Guantanamo happens, is because we till the soil with torturing our people in our own death chambers first. And in maximum security prisons, where 25,000 people are kept in virtual isolation – and human beings can't function in isolation; the brain deteriorates. After a couple of months in isolation, a person can't even read a book or look at TV. We are MADE to interact with each other. Our brains function by interacting in dialogue with other human beings; and to plunge people into isolation … So we are already doing that in our super max prisons; and we have the legalese to back it up. So you have Justice Antonin Scalia saying, "What a quiet and enviable death by lethal injection." How removed do you have to be to call a death by lethal injection a quiet and enviable death?

How removed do you have to be to have someone like Justice Scalia, one of the Catholics on the Supreme Court, who goes to Mass every Sunday, to say when at last the Supreme Court in "Atkins" said, "No we can't execute mentally challenged people;" when they said in "Simmons," "No, we can't kill kids." The great irony was we were one of two nations in the world that did not sign on to The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'cause we didn't want to give up killing juveniles. Two nations of the world wouldn't sign on to the U. N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. And so, when finally in the "Simmons" decisions, they say, "You can't kill kids." And the dissent, the dissent, the words from him, "Don't tell me they're kids. They know right from wrong. Every human being has a free will. They have free will, and they have God's grace, and they know right from wrong. Don't tell me they're children. Don't tell me they grew up in poverty. Don't tell me they're mildly, mentally challenged." There's no litigation; in his books, the legalisms. To me, it's like you put on one pair of gloves, then you put on

another pair of gloves, you put on another, and you cannot touch the human cheek, and you cannot feel the tear going down between people who are about to be executed.

Dobie Williams, the first story in *Death of Innocence* with his mama; he had an IQ of 65. Atkins happened a little bit too late. If the Supreme Court had awakened to human rights, you know, for mentally challenged people two years earlier, Dobie would be alive today; but no! it took 'em till two years after Dobie was killed. He was killed in '99; they woke up in 2001, and then not without dissent about whether or not you can kill kids, because when you turned the switch, not human, not the way the rest of us are, and identifying people solely with their act, that's how we have all these kids being tried as adults. They look at the act. They say that certainly is an adult crime, crime with adults. Do you know we have 2,000 young people, some as young as 14 years old, who have been put in with life without parole sentences in adult prisons? And we don't see 'em. The other unseen invisible ones are the 2.3 million people that are in prison around this nation – one of the biggest growth industries is the prison industry – 2.3 million, 2/3 there for non-violent crimes, non-violent crimes that had to do with drugs – criminalizing drugs, throwing people away for life, for drugs, or three strikes and you're out.

I met these parents in California. Their son had been in the back seat of a car and two other kids. Their son didn't even know what was going to go on. They didn't know the ones in the front had guns. He didn't know there was going to be a robbery. And then somebody is killed and there's their son brought to trial. And the prosecutor saying, "It was a conspiracy. The kid knew; he was in the car; he knew whose company he was with." And now they were facing 25 years. Their son in prison 25 years, and the agony of these parents, and how their whole life has regrouped around going to see him steadily – 25 years, their son, because he was in the back seat of a car. That is not very far removed by South Africa and group association with a crime; and they hang you too. And this is the United States of America. But it's all unseen.

Our poverty has been unseen, 'cause we live in different neighborhoods; and we don't go in those neighborhoods – I'm talking about me now; I'm talking about me – our motherhouse practically abutted one of the ten major housing projects in New Orleans; and I had never been to one of them. And I knew that there were some sisters, and there were some people, working in these places, and I thought, "Great, some are called to serve THE poor, but not me. And what's this justice got to do with the gospel of Jesus? Even Jesus had said, 'The poor you'll always have with you.'" The reason you're always gonna be humble, when you're in a community, is 'cause they remember what you said in the microphone during those debates. They remember what Helen said when. And I was saying things like, "When the whole thing of social justice was coming up, that it was integral to the gospel of Jesus." That was coming up from my sisters in Latin America, okay? And you know we're all in our ministries we've done forever. I'm out in the suburbs giving retreats, you know; and, you know, it's like, hey, things are going well. But wait, social justice: get involved with poor people, and I'm going, "If the poor have God, they have everything." (Laughter) "I don't know any people; I don't know any real poor people." And I had grown up in such privilege. The only way I knew African American people was our servants. I didn't even know their last names. Ellen worked in the house; Jessie worked in the yard; I never knew their last names. And always I've been kind to people, kind to individuals, never questioned the segregation that was going on everywhere. At Sacred Heart church we made our First Communion in our little white dresses and veils; and the black kids had to make their Communion separate – so much for the Body of Christ – but I never questioned it.

You see, culture is like everybody in a school of fish swimming in water. A culture is just what everybody does, and what everybody thinks; and you don't think differently unless Grace slams you. Or you meet people that are living at a whole other level, like Bishop Gumbleton, or many of you. Or somebody stands up at a meeting and says, "We are going to talking about the elephant in the living room." I mean, you know things like that happen, and you go: "What? What? What?"

We live in community. We need community. That's why we gathered here. My waking up was because I heard a talk – finally I heard a talk, because I was ready to hear the talk. It was coming to me from every side, and I was batting it off, because it didn't hit. See, the way we see things, and the way we live out our conscience, is we have a screen; we have a membrane; and we let in certain things; and we

jettison other things. And for me it was, "If we live in the love of God, and we love the people around us, and we are always charitable, what's the big deal about doing justice? We're nuns; we're not social workers. How are we going to deal with public housing, and all that kind of stuff?" Because that means you got to dig in; you gotta know the issues of your day; you gotta study; you gotta do social analysis. Did you ever notice poor people never go to theology schools? (Laughter) It's only certain ones of us that go away and study theology.

And I woke up! And the stories in *Dead Man Walking,* there was this beautiful woman, Maria Gustinial, a Sister of Notre Dame, who worked at Emmanuel College for 40 years and taught sociology and the New Testament. She woke me up. And I didn't know what was going to happen; I wasn't happy. We're all being carted off in buses to Terre Haute, because this nun was going to talk to us for three days about social justice. And I said, "Well, maybe with the grace of God I can come through unscathed." (Laughter) Then I got through the first day unscathed, because she talked about the First World, the developing countries, kids who starve every night, the Gross National Product, because I knew things weren't fair – the Book of Ecclesiastes says that – you've got the rich and the poor. I mean, you know, that's how the world has always been.

She announces that she's going to talk about Jesus the next day. I'd slept well that night before. I said what is she going to tell me about Jesus, I mean I've studied Jesus, I gave retreats on Jesus; I pray to Jesus; I meditate on Jesus. What's she going to tell me about Jesus that I don't already know? Kaboom! And the line – I remember it because I'm sitting just like you are – and here it comes: "Jesus preached good news to the poor." And I thought, "Sure, I knew what was coming next: about how every hair of your head is numbered: and God lets rain fall on the just and unjust: good news to the poor, about how loved we are by God that you can even call God: like Dada, Daddy, Abba, that's how close. We can just turn in our hearts and talk to God; and you don't have to keep doing the sacrifices in the temple." And her words, integral to the good news to the poor that Jesus preached were: "That they would be poor no longer."

Now, how can you have good news when people's babies are dying before they're five years old? That dignity, that when you're the ones working the land, like in Nicaragua, and El Salvador, and El Salvador, where, what, eleven families own 90% of the land, and you're working, and you get a pittance at the end, and your children aren't educated. And, see, there had been a theology that basically said, "If such is your situation in life, you accept you're suffering with Jesus on the cross; and one day you'll have a great reward." So, it's basically accepting injustice. Now they suffered; now we should be charitable to 'em; but one day, they're going to have a great reward in heaven. And that also gives us permission to do anything we want to earth, because it's a vale of tears anyway. And we're all going to heaven working for that. And it's a two-tiered spirituality; so what happens on earth doesn't really matter. And I was really bent on going to heaven, (laughter) and really bent on being holy, and being a saint, and the life of perfection up to that point.

And, suddenly, we went out on the streets in New Orleans, stood there in solidarity to ask that people could have proper housing, and that they could get maintenance to come. And I thought of my daddy, one phone call getting anything done on the house. One phone call and you got the resources you need. All I knew was agency, that you get things done; you make a phone call; you make things happen. I didn't know! And that's when I got the invitation, "Will you write a letter to someone on death row?" And that's when I wrote to the man; and that's when he wrote back; and then that's when the trouble started. (laughter) Because, if he hadn't written back, I maybe could have just sent off these flurries to this really unimaginative land of a place called death row, where people were sitting in cells and waiting to be killed.

Now, I want to talk about discourse within the Catholic Church. I want to talk about relentless dialogue on an issue until it changes, because you cannot stop discourse. And if there's one thing the Catholic Church has always upheld it is the primacy of conscience in the life of an individual. I remember this being taught this by Sr. Mary Lawrence in first grade at Sacred Heart School, that if your conscience tells you something's wrong, then you are not to do it, even if what you're doing maybe is the right thing. but you think it's not the right thing, and you follow your conscience, you will always be able to get into heaven on that. And you gotta follow that conscience thing. You see, I learned that. And the reason that

discourse is so important is, because it's people out of conscience, speaking about what we think is right, and what we think is wrong.

And Teilhard de Chadin said that when discourse happens, our dialogue happens. It's always, like, when a pot begins to boil. He actually talked about this as consciousness coming up, when we were moving from being apes and primates into consciousness that began to spread around the earth. And that it always comes up like tiny bubbles in a pot, when a pot is boiling. Notice that the discourse is not one great big fat bubble that suddenly comes up in the pot and then suddenly we have new consciousness. It's little bubbles in little pots that begin to happen inside ordinary people, who have the Holy Spirit in us; and we begin to discuss things; and we gather to discuss things, to have our own consciousness changed, and with that then our conscience, because with consciousness comes conscience.

"Once we know something," like Archbishop Desmond Tutu says, "you cannot be neutral about it." When your consciousness has been raised about something that is an injustice, if we walk away from it and we do nothing, then we have contributed to the evil that it is. Once we are aware, we must stand. Evona Gabara talks about conscience and consciousness that come together.

In the beginning – and I tell about this in *Death of Innocence* – I'm going to give you the short version, so we can have some conversation together – short version is: when I came out of that death chamber, nobody, no religious leaders, were standing up against the death penalty at all. And what I began to do is, I simply began to go to talk to anybody who will listen to me, to tell them the story, and bring them through the experience, and bring them over to both arms of the cross; suffering and the murder victim's families, we gotta be with them. What does it mean, even if you'll allow a family to send a representative to sit in the front row and watch as another human being is killed, and then be told that that is going to heal you? What does that mean? How morally bankrupt in a society are we to say to certain people in these victims family, we will allow to witness the violence we are going to do, and that's suppose to give them closure and healing? What does that mean? What happens to people in that? And you've got to bring them through that.

So whoever would hear me give a talk, I would go? And I'm telling you: those audiences were real little in the beginning, like St. Christopher's Nursing Home in New Orleans, a right after lunch announcement: "Who wants to hear the death penalty nun (Laughter) go to parlor A." So three stalwart, somewhat awake, human beings came into parlor A; and I began to talk; and within a few minutes, two of 'em were gone. One lady – I still remember this lady, 'cause I had my eyes locked with that lady like, "Don't leave me; like, you're it today." (Laughter) But, whoever would hear me, I would talk; and then, what we get in our education begins to kick in.

Then, I began to write. I began to write op-ed pieces for the Times Picayune, letters to the editor. And then, I go, "I really ought to talk about that experience with Lloyd Lawson, the father of David, when I went to pray with him in this little chapel, where he kept vigil before the Blessed Sacrament. We said the rosary together. Then I meet somebody from St. Anthony's Magazine; and he said they would like me to write that for us; and so I write the story of praying the rosary with Lloyd Lawson and I sent it off; and a magazine publishes it. So I'm going, "Well maybe I'm supposed to write." And then I get into the book thing.

But the discourse is just always there; and then you learn. See, when you're talking with people,; talking in the sociology classes at Loyola, captive audience, and here I go, talking about the death penalty. And in the beginning, in my talks, I talk all about human rights. I talk about what happened to Patrick Sonnier. I bring them through the execution, and what it means to do this to a human being, and at the end the kids are saying, "What about the victim's families? You're not talking about the victim's family." And all their rage was inside them, and everything I'm saying, they're waiting for me to address the victim's family. And I learned from them. I can't give a talk about Patrick Sonnier, and his human rights, and what it means to you, if I haven't gone with them, and taken them, and felt the outrage with them. But what happened to the victim's family? I was trying to go over to just one arm of the cross, and not take them into both, and even acknowledging my own mistakes when I did things wrong. And, then, I

learned how. And this is how the gospels got written. This is how our own gospels get written. It's that we are in there, and we are experiencing it, and the dialogue and you learn.

So with the Catholic Church, we couldn't get our bishops in Louisiana to take a strong stand, because Archbishop Hannen, who had been in the military, would block everything; and so I gave up on that. I said, "Well, we're gonna work with the people." And actually that's what I followed. Go to the people; because, as the people awaken, the Church is awakening, really, because it's us. You know that. It's us. And as the people awaken, and then we actually can sometimes help our leaders stand up, because it's a very controversial issue. And it was very unusual. Have you ever heard about a priest bringing up the death penalty in a Louisiana parish? They wouldn't bring it up. I mean, the collections would go down – the controversy. What happens when you become part of an institution? You gotta pay for the air conditioning system. I mean, you get involved in the – well, we got a building; we got people; we gotta pay health insurance and so it comes – I don't know, I'm not gonna bring this up; and we're gonna have a huge controversy, because it means a priest in a parish has gotta go through the journey himself, and bring his whole church with him. And it's tough.

And I said this, and I'm gonna talk about it, and then I got to have a dialogue with Pope John Paul, but that was one of the things I said when I wrote this letter to him. I said, "The death penalty is an issue of poor people." And to the extent that people are close to poor people, they get it on this issue. To the extent that people are very removed from poor people, it's not that you can't get it, but people are so removed, you've got to build. When I got to speak in a very wealthy parish, as I did in Florida once, I mean you gotta build the fire. You can't blow on the coals. You blow in the coals, and there's a fire, 'cause you're already lit. But where people have no experience with this, you gotta get the candle in, you gotta get the little sticks, put a little kerosene on, gotta light the fire, gotta blow, fan and take them through all the experiences through story telling. And then you keep doing it, keep doing it.

And then in that second story of *Death of Innocence,* a man in Virginia. I get involved in his case. I was summoned, and his name was Joseph Odell, and he was innocent. They were trying to save his life. And Italy got involved. The Italian Parliament read about it. The Human Rights Division of the Italian Parliament, they sent a delegation over. All of Italy! They had fax machines in all these towns and cities in Italy, sent over to George Allen, who was the Governor of Virginia: "Don't kill Joseph Odell." The night Joseph Odell was executed in Virginia. Five million people stayed tuned to their radios through the middle of the night and the wee hours of the morning to see what happened to Joseph Odell. That was in Italy. In Virginia, it was one more execution. And the mayor of Palermo comes to visit, and makes Joseph Odell an honorary member citizen of Palermo, and says to him, "Joseph, if Virginia kills you, we will not let you be buried in the soil of this state. We will ship your body, and you will be buried in the graveyard in Palermo." And that's what happened in the end.

And in the process Laurie Urs, who was working to save Joseph's life, is brought by the Italian Parliament over to Italy; and she's going to see the Pope. And I get this phone call, and she says, "Sugar" – that was her expression – "Sugar, I'm going to get to see the Pope. The Italian Parliament, they are bringing me to all these towns and cities. They're really raising their voices for Joe; and don't you want to come and talk to the Pope about the death penalty? Aren't popes and nuns, you know, like tight (laughter)?" So I said, "Yes, sometimes, sometimes." The long and short of it is I got to have a direct conversation with Pope John Paul. And what I was able to give him was pastoral experience. Because, you know, you can have these little theoretical discussions, and moral theologies, and intrinsically evil, like abortion or not, you have all this stuff going on, but what I laid in his lap was 14 years of being with people who were being executed; and I said, "Your Holiness, the catechism talks about the inviolable dignity of innocent killing. But when you walk in with a man whose going to be killed, and he says to you 'Sister, please pray God holds up my legs,' and he's been rendered utterly defenseless. There is no dignity in this death. Does the Church only uphold the dignity of the innocent?"

And Pope John Paul – there was a lot of dialogue going on – I'm gonna mention again all the bubbles in the pot; I'm not saying I'm like Catherine of Sienna. I talked to the Pope; he changed the death penalty; and here we are. I'm saying I was one bubble in the pot, but I was one little bubble that got right into the Pope's lap, and laid in his lap pastoral experience; and he's a very pastoral man; and the

catechism was changed. And it was intervened in by him, and it was changed by him, so that we have now vigorous opposition to the death penalty (much applause).

And so you had relentless dialogue that does not stop, because our consciences won't let it stop, because people are suffering at these injustices that happen; and so we must raise our voices. And what happened is when the Pope raised his voice after the Catechism was changed, in St. Louis, in 1999, that it was read. He had been to the United States four other times, and had never mentioned the death penalty; and in St. Louis, he said first time: "Put the death penalty with the other pro-life issues." And that's the beauty of being a Catholic is this consistent ethic of life across the board. And so here for the first time he's saying in St. Louis: "No to abortion and euthanasia and physician assisted suicide and no to the death penalty, which is cruel and unnecessary. An even those among us who have done terrible crimes have a dignity that will not be taken from them." That happened in 1999.

In 2005 the Catholic bishops of the United States announced a Catholic campaign to end the use of the death penalty. They announced this campaign; and they did a poll before to see about Catholic attitudes; and it's shifted. You know, we are the leading moral wedge now in this country. As a religious people of faith, we are the moral edge. New Jersey did away with the death punishment, because of Catholic involvement. New Mexico did it led by Catholic involvement. And it shows that, whereas nationally 64% of Americans say they support the death penalty, among Catholic adults, it is 48%, and among young Catholics, age 30 and below, it is 42% who support the death penalty. We have a shift in consciousness that has happened among our people.

Now we have to take it into action to make it happen. Well, let's get back to the Bishops Campaign; they announced they have a campaign to end the death penalty. We're excited; we go on the web site. What are they doing in the campaign? Well, they printed a pamphlet, and that's a good start. I don't want to knock the pamphlet, because it says, "Catholic Campaign to end the death penalty." But then we know what we gotta do, those of us who are grass roots church. We have formed a mobilizing group to be the grass roots arm to help that campaign, and that educational campaign to get into parishes, to get into dioceses, and move it across the country. But to get the teaching clear is a huge, huge step; and so that's our task. And we move toward the day when we will not torture and not kill human beings (much applause). In whatever way you have your hand on that rope, that life rope, the presence among people who are suffering is at the core of it; the presence of Jesus in the suffering ones, in my own life the spiritual practice.

Tomorrow, I'll be on death row in Louisiana with Manuel Ortiz, a man from El Salvador, who's been on death row 17 years, and who is totally, absolutely innocent. And we're having a hearing – 17 years! I keep meeting people in this broken system who are innocent. Even if they were guilty, they should not be tortured and killed, but are completely innocent. And people say, "Oh, are you still a spiritual advisor to people on death row?" And I say, "They are the hub of the wheel." That's the part of the fire, being present and accompanying them, is what keeps me true and helps me grow to keep going on to death row. It's the presence with people that we must never lose; and it's the heart of what we have to be about in whatever way that is. So thank you very much. You've been wonderful. Thank you. (Applause)

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