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Introduction

"There is nothing like a person that has walked the same path as I have," the sister of a murder victim told Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights at the end of the Victims' Seminar that we organized in September of 2011. "To hear how others have coped with loss helps me stay strong against the death penalty," she said.

For MVFHR, 2011 was another year of helping victims to come together and to stay strong against the death penalty. Our pro-victim, anti-death penalty message reached families, lawmakers, students, attorneys, radio and television audiences, and religious leaders throughout the United States and in several other countries, including in Asia where victims' voices are so badly needed. In South Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan, MVFHR's audiences included prosecutors, judges, and police officers, and our U.S. delegation met with families of murder victims and families of executed persons in each of these locations, taking powerful steps toward a global network of victims working to end the death penalty.

Challenging the assumption that executions provide justice or closure for victims' families continues to be essential to challenging the need for capital punishment. As a victim-focused abolition and human rights organization, MVFHR brings survivors together to declare that the death penalty has no place in a just society. This year's annual report demonstrates that MVFHR continues to be an integral part of the movement against the death penalty and for victims.

U.S. Program

Policy Work

Because survivors of murder victims are commonly assumed to favor capital punishment, the voices of survivors who oppose the death penalty are in demand whenever the issue is under review or debate. MVFHR helps victims speak out against the death penalty and provides an organizational context and affiliation that strengthens each individual expression of opposition.

In 2011, MVFHR members testified as part of repeal efforts in Connecticut, Maryland, and Montana, and testified against expansion of the death penalty in New Hampshire and as part of hearings in connection with the New Hampshire Death Penalty Study Commission. Working with our colleagues toward the achievement of abolition in Illinois, MVFHR members testified before lawmakers, gave media interviews, and were present when the Governor signed the repeal bill into law.

Public Education

Voices of victims who oppose the death penalty help move the minds and hearts of people who are considering the issue, and ongoing public education is central to our organization's work. During 2011, MVFHR members participated in a wide variety of speaking events, both in the U.S. and abroad (see International Program, below). We addressed participants at the "Human Rights: Right Here" Conference at Haverford College in Pennsylvania, were part of the "Unimpeachable Voices Against the Death Penalty" panel at Amnesty International's 50th Annual General Meeting in San Francisco, and spoke to hundreds of university, church, and other audiences throughout the year.

Drawing on what we have learned from our public education experience, MVFHR members presented a panel at the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty's annual conference that offered guidance to our abolitionist allies about how to support victims' family members when inviting them to speak at public events. "Whether you're the most experienced speaker or the person who is daring to speak out for the first time, the act of speaking publicly takes courage," was the core message of our panel. "We do it, despite the cost to us, because we believe it is the right thing to do and we believe that the voices of victims who oppose the death penalty are critically important to the national and international debate about the death penalty. Still, just because we feel compelled to do it, and choose to do it, does not mean it is ever easy."

We continued to expand MVFHR's online Gallery of Victims' Stories, which puts real faces on victim opposition to the death penalty and is an accessible way to introduce lawmakers, students, members of the clergy, and other victims' family members to the issue. Our "For Victims, Against the Death Penalty" blog regularly presented our message of victim opposition to the death penalty through reports about our members' work, excerpts from their testimony, letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, and speeches, and summaries of relevant research and commentary.

Through our newsletter, *Article 3*, we drew attention to specific aspects of the death penalty debate and helped heighten awareness of victims' needs in the aftermath of murder. Newsletter issues in 2011 featured reflections and statements from survivors on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks, an interview with a leading victims' advocate, and an interview with university researchers, publicizing the results of their recent study showing that victims who oppose the death penalty receive less, and less prominent, news coverage than those who favor the death penalty.

Victims' Seminar

A lot of energy this year went into organizing the Victims' Seminar that MVFHR held in New Orleans in September. The seminar brought together 42 victims from 21 states and was primarily designed for victims who were new to the abolition movement. The goal was to offer training in speaking out against the death penalty and a chance for people to come together and connect with others who have been through a similar experience.

"Many opponents of capital punishment don't have to imagine the horror of a family member's murder. We've lived it – and we don't feel that another killing is what will help us. Rather than a 'proportionally irreversible response,' we want a response that truly addresses the many different needs victims' families have and avoids the lasting trauma that executions inflict on the criminal's innocent family members."

– From MVFHR's response to a Kentucky newspaper editorial

In organizing the seminar, MVFHR worked with state abolition groups to identify people who might benefit from the training and from the empowering experience of being with a larger group of victim-abolitionists. The seminar created a safe space where participants found a shared identity and solidarity in a room filled entirely with others who had experienced the killing of a family member.

The agenda included a history of victims in the abolition movement; an explanation of the national strategy to abolish the death penalty; discussion about the experiences and challenges of interacting and working with both the victims' movement and abolition movement; training in telling one's story and in self-care. Three breakout groups – family members of murder victims, family members of executed persons, and family members of victims of unsolved murder cases – provided people with an opportunity to exchange thoughts and experiences unique to that subset of victims. For many of the participants, the seminar was a transformational experience, inspiring them to return to their communities and become more active and effective in advocating for repeal of the death penalty. Here are a few representative comments from participants:

"I loved the relief of saying all that I felt."

"I feel more confident now in my public advocacy."

"This meeting helped us express our efforts to lead positive lives, and to plan further work toward our goal of abolishing the death penalty in the U.S. and worldwide."

"No Silence, No Shame" project

As part of our ongoing effort to draw attention to the ways in which the death penalty harms families of those executed, we gave a presentation at the International Institute for Restorative Practices conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, titled "How Should Communities Respond to Those Harmed By the Death Penalty," focusing in part on the harm suffered by families of the executed. A report of this presentation, titled "Unacknowledged Victims of State Executions," was subsequently published in *Genuine Justice*, a blog created by a Virginia attorney, and on *OpEdNews.com*, a site focusing on "Progressive United States and International News, Opinion, Op-Eds, and Politics." We also gave a presentation, focusing on how the death penalty harms families of the executed, to law students attending a training hosted by the British group *Amicus: Assisting Lawyers for Justice on Death Row*.

Also in this area, we published an MVFHR newsletter story, "My Brother's Execution: From Silence to Speaking Out," based on the stories of a new MVFHR board member and two new members, all of whom lost brothers to execution.

"It appears that although victims are increasingly opposed to the death penalty, even in the face of the rise of the closure argument, those victims are not getting as much attention, or their cases are not getting as much attention, as those in which the victim wants the defendant to be executed." – From MVFHR's Fall 2011 newsletter

Media and Communications

“Executing Brother’s Killer Would be Second Wrong,” “Filling Another Coffin Will Not Bring Our Loved Ones Back,” “Victim’s Son Objects as Texas Sets Execution Date.”

Throughout 2011, MVFHR continued to track coverage of victim opposition to the death penalty – mentions in news or feature articles, op-ed pieces, and letters to the editor -- and to include relevant excerpts in our newsletter and blog. Voices of MVFHR members were featured in news and feature stories throughout the U.S. and abroad, including mentions in *The New York Times*, CNN, *The Nation*, and the Inter-Press Service.

“Members of Murder Victims’ Families for Human Rights are in Mongolia on this day to lend support to those who are calling for an end to the death penalty in this country. We are meeting with other family members of murder victims to share our common pain, and we are meeting with public officials and others to explain why we oppose the death penalty. As survivors with a direct stake in the death penalty debate, we join today in the call for a worldwide moratorium on executions.” – from MVFHR’s press conference in Mongolia on World Day Against the Death Penalty 2011

International Program

We continued our focus on amplifying victims’ voices against the death penalty in Asia and worked closely with colleague organizations in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Mongolia.

In September, we participated in events marking South Korea’s 5,000th day without an execution. Our delegation of U.S. members met with parliamentarians, addressed church audiences, held an emotionally powerful gathering with local family members of murder victims, and spoke at the Korean National Assembly, where the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee also included mention of MVFHR in his public remarks.

A few weeks later, an MVFHR group traveled to Mongolia and Taiwan, where we met with parliamentarians, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and family members of victims. In both Mongolia and Taiwan we also gave several public presentations and media interviews. Over and over again our listeners told us, “This is not a perspective we have heard before,” and we recognize how important it is to help MVFHR’s message be heard in this region of the world.

In addition to our Asia work, we engaged in meaningful collaborations with colleagues in other regions as well. We worked with the Lebanese Association for Civil Rights to develop and publish an article in MVFHR’s newsletter about victims’ voices within the National Campaign for the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Lebanon. We also participated in Penal Reform International’s “Progressing toward abolition of the death penalty and alternative sanctions that respect international human rights standards” conference, where the participants -- which included government officials and representatives of civil society and inter-governmental organizations from 31 countries – produced a series of recommendations called the London Declaration. MVFHR’s particular contribution to this effort was to include this recommendation regarding victims’ families: “In recognition of the suffering of victims of violent crime and their loved ones, call upon states to: ensure that all victims be treated with dignity, respect and equality throughout the criminal process, regardless of their beliefs about or position on the issue of the death penalty ...”

Finally, we continued to serve as steering committee members of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

Office

Following the August 2010 fire in the office building where MVFHR had been housed, we experienced a period of dislocation for several months while staff continued to carry out MVFHR's program and administrative work from their homes. In September 2011, we moved into new space at the NonProfit Center, which was founded by Third Sector New England to house a diverse group of progressive social change organizations in the Boston area. We are excited to settle in to this new space, and are also grateful to our colleagues at the American Friends Service Committee's New England Regional Office for providing us office space and camaraderie for so many years.

Looking Ahead

We end 2011 looking ahead to an array of new projects and plans: releasing the 10th anniversary edition of *Dignity Denied: The Experience of Victims' Family Members Who Oppose the Death Penalty*, expanding our website and increasing our capacity to communicate with our members and with the media, creating networks of family members of law enforcement and family members of the executed – and those are just some of the many plans in the works.

As always, we look forward to continuing to amplify the voices of victims and the voices of families of the executed. We will continue to educate listeners, readers, and voters about victim opposition to the death penalty and about how the death penalty harms families of the executed. Throughout our work, we will put into action our belief that executions do not achieve justice for victims and that the death penalty is a violation of basic human rights.

We remain extremely grateful to all who support the work of Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights.

2011 Board of Directors and Staff

Stan Allridge, member of the board of directors, is a family member of murder victims (both his mother's parents were murdered, in separate incidents, and his maternal aunt was murdered as well) and also a family member of the executed (two of his brothers were executed in Texas). Stan has spoken against the death penalty in several venues, including a large public presentation with Sister Helen Prejean, an Amnesty International press conference in Jamaica, and a panel at the U.S. Human Rights Network conference. He works to educate audiences about the effects of the death penalty on families and particularly on youth.

Bill Babbitt, member of the Board of Directors, has spoken publicly about the way the death penalty affects families of the executed since his brother Manny was executed by the state of California in 1999. His story is told in the book *Capital Consequences* and in the documentaries *And Then One Night* and *A Question of Justice*. Babbitt has spoken at a press conference at the United Nations, testified before legislative committees in Massachusetts and New Jersey, and addressed many college audiences about mental illness and the death penalty.

Jeanne Bishop, Treasurer of the Board of Directors, is the sister of Nancy Bishop Langert, who was shot to death along with her husband and their unborn child in 1990. Bishop has testified before Illinois the Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment, the Illinois Prisoner Review Board, and several state legislative committees. She appears in the death penalty documentaries *The Innocent* and *Too Flawed To Fix*. Along with her sister Jennifer, she received the Brigid Award from Concern Worldwide, honoring women who exemplify justice, generosity, and compassion in their work and daily lives. Bishop serves as assistant public defender in the Office of the Cook County Public Defender and is an adjunct professor at Northwestern University School of Law in the trial advocacy program. She is the author of several law review articles and op-ed pieces, serves on the Advisory Board of the Northwestern Center on Wrongful Convictions, and volunteers for the gun violence prevention organizations Million Mom March and the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence.

Catherine Brady, Bookkeeper, has been crunching numbers since it was done with pencil and ledger paper. She took an eight-year break from numbers to engage in grassroots organizing and fundraising in the 1980s and early 90s with INFACT, leader of the Nestle and GE boycotts. Catherine has held positions ranging from part-time bookkeeper to Director of Finance and Administration with several progressive non-profits in the Boston area.

Priscilla Caputo, Administrative Staff, has worked for several years with families and victims of oppression and violence developing and directing a variety of clinical and community programs to provide support and equal access to crucial services within the medical, legal, and social service systems. She is a counselor, educator, and committed human rights advocate.

Renny Cushing, Executive Director, whose father was murdered in 1988 and whose brother-in-law was murdered in 2011, is a lifelong social justice activist and a pioneer in the effort to bridge the death penalty abolition movement and the victims' rights movement. He has testified before the U.S. Congress and several state legislatures and addressed hundreds of audiences in other venues in the U.S. and abroad regarding human rights and victim opposition to the death penalty. He is the co-author of *Dignity Denied: The Experience of Murder Victims' Family Members Who Oppose the*

Death Penalty and I Don't Want Another Kid to Die: Families of Victims Murdered by Juveniles Oppose the Juvenile Death Penalty. He serves on the board of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and the steering committee of the World Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. He is a former three-term member of the New Hampshire State House of Representatives and of the Criminal Justice Committee of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Reverend Walter Everett, member of the Board of Directors, serves on the board of Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and speaks several times a month to audiences around the states. He has testified before the Joint Judiciary Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly and spoken at numerous events surrounding the state's efforts to carry out its first execution in 45 years. Everett's son was shot and killed in 1987, and after a long struggle Everett was able to reconcile with the man convicted of the murder, to the extent that the two now speak together at prisons, universities, and churches. Reverend Everett has been active in several restorative justice organizations, including the Restorative Justice Task Force of the Christian Conference of Connecticut (for which he served as Chair) and the Hartford-based Board of Community Partners in Action.

Aba Gayle, member of the Board of Directors, has been an outspoken death penalty abolitionist for several years. Aba Gayle's daughter Catherine Blount was murdered when she was 19 years old. Twelve years later, Gayle contacted the man who took her daughter's life to tell him of her pain and grief, and of a spiritual quest that led to forgiveness. The letter resulted in a profound healing for Aba Gayle. She visited San Quentin death row and became convinced that the death penalty was a violation of human rights, and has been an abolitionist ever since. Aba Gayle serves on the Board of Oregonians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, The World Forgiveness Initiative, and The Catherine Blount Foundation. She has traveled and spoken publicly with the Journey of Hope and MVFHR. Her travels have taken her to many states and to Scotland, France, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Taiwan. She has been the subject of several documentaries including *The Closure Myth*, *In Catherine's Name*, *Hate vs Forgiveness*, *From Violence to Healing*, and a new *Walking Interview* to be shown in the Netherlands in December 2011.

Toshi Kazama, Asia Program Director, is a photographer who spent eight years gathering the images for "Youth of Death Row: A Photodocumentary Exploration." The documentary includes photos of 20 American youths on death rows across the country – photos that Kazama was able to take after being granted unprecedented access to the prisoners and the facilities – and portraits of the prisoner's family members, the victim's family members, the prison, the prison cemetery, the state's execution chamber, and the crime scene. Kazama has shown the documentary at universities, conferences, and other public forums in the United States, Japan, and Taiwan, and received considerable press coverage for the presentation and the discussions that follow.

Yolanda Littlejohn, member of the Board of Directors, is the sister of Jacquetta Thomas, who was murdered in North Carolina in 1991. Two men were arrested for Jacquetta's murder. One was never convicted; the other was tried, convicted, and sentenced to life in prison. In 2009, he was exonerated and released from prison when DNA evidence proved that he could not have been the killer. The murder of Jacquetta Thomas is now a cold case – an unsolved homicide. Yolanda has been active in the effort to repeal her state's death penalty and speaks frequently to groups, telling her story and discussing the effects of exoneration on victims' families.

Kate Lowenstein, Program Director, whose father was murdered in 1980, is an attorney and social worker with many years of experience organizing and advocating for victims who oppose the death penalty. In 2004, Kate co-wrote *amicus curiae* briefs on behalf of victims' family members in two

high-profile cases that were before the U.S. Supreme Court: *Schriro v. Summerlin* and *Roper v. Simmons*. In her work with MVFHR, Kate contributes expert knowledge about victims' rights issues and death penalty abolition work and keen sensitivity to the issues involved in working with victims and helping them to assert their rights and become effective spokespeople against the death penalty.

Bill Pelke, member of the Board of Directors, is the president and co-founder of "The Journey of Hope ... from Violence to Healing," an organization that hosts annual speaking tours led by murder victims' family members who oppose the death penalty. He is also the chair of the board of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and a board member of Alaskans Against the Death Penalty, and he has spoken against the death penalty in numerous forums across the United States and in 10 other countries. Initially a supporter of the death penalty, Pelke eventually became involved in an international effort to spare the life of the 15-year-old girl who was sentenced to death for the murder of Pelke's grandmother. He continued to speak out against the juvenile death penalty up until the Supreme Court's recent ruling in the *Simmons* case. He has been interviewed for numerous radio, television, and magazine stories.

Vicki Schieber, Chair of the Board of Directors, has been outspoken in her opposition to the death penalty since her daughter was raped and murdered in 1998. Vicki and her husband Sylvester actively opposed the death penalty for their daughter's murderer and subsequently testified in support of abolition in Maryland and several other states. They have published op-ed pieces about the death penalty in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Washington Post*, and their story is included in an NBC film on the death penalty sponsored by the Robert Kennedy Foundation. Vicki has long been active in leadership positions in non-profits dedicated to literacy and programs for elderly, disabled, and low-income residents of Washington, DC. She holds a Masters in Business Administration and served for many years as Executive Director of the Council on Employee Benefits in Bethesda, Maryland. Vicki serves on the board of Maryland Citizens Against State Executions and as Education Coordinator for the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty, the laity arm of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Susannah Sheffer, Project Director and Staff Writer, has developed numerous written materials about victim opposition to the death penalty, including *Double Tragedies: Victims Speak Out Against the Death Penalty for People with Severe Mental Illness* and *Creating More Victims: How Executions Hurt the Families Left Behind*. She is the author of four books, including the forthcoming *Fighting For Their Lives: Inside the Experience of Capital Defense Attorneys*, and in her work with MVFHR she draws upon two decades of experience interviewing, writing, and editing.

James Staub, member of the Board of Directors, is active with Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and has spoken publicly at schools, churches, and civic groups throughout the state. James's mother Patricia Staub was murdered in Georgia when James was 12 years old. Her murder remains unsolved.

Marie Verzulli, member of the Board of Directors, whose sister Cathy was murdered, works as the victim/survivor advocate for New Yorkers for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, focusing on filling the gaps in services and empowering victims to advocate for programs that address the root causes of crime and violence. Marie served as Vice-President of the Capital District Coalition for Crime Victims Rights and now serves on the Restorative Justice Commission of the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese, the Center for Community Justice Board, and the advisory committee of the downstate parole reform and prison re-entry project. She is the Program Director of The Limits of Loyalty Project, which educates youth about violence and safety, and she is the founder and director of Family and Friends of Homicide Victims.

Bud Welch, President of the Board of Directors, became an ardent spokesperson against the death penalty after his daughter, along with 167 others, was killed in the bomb blast that destroyed the Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995. Welch has testified before 22 state legislative bodies, the U.S. House Judiciary Committee, the Russian Duma, and the British and European Parliaments, and addressed groups at universities, law schools, and religious organizations across the U.S. and Europe. He serves on the board of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and the Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, and was a member of the board of the Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation. For his work as an anti-death penalty activist, he has received several “abolitionist of the year” awards and other honors and been interviewed for numerous print and broadcast news stories.

Financial Report

Murder Victims’ Families for Human Rights (MVFHR) was founded in 2004 and was incorporated in the state of New Hampshire as a non-profit organization in 2005. MVFHR has received a determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service that it is a tax-exempt non-profit organization within the meaning of Section 501(c)3 of the Federal Tax Code. Donations to MVFHR may be claimed as a deduction for charitable contribution purposes on federal tax returns. A copy of our Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and Financial Statements are available at guidestar.org, and our IRS Form 990 will be available there by July.

MVFHR maintains an account at Bank of America. Deposits are made at branches in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. A finance committee, composed of members of the board and staff, reviews the organization’s finances via teleconference call meetings.

The unaudited statements that appear on the following pages show the organization’s preliminary financial position as of December 31, 2011. The income statement shows a break-even for the year. The balance sheet shows funds received in 2011 from the European Instrument on Democracy and Human Rights, unspent through year-end.. The balance sheet also shows grants receivable of \$35,000 expected in 2012.

MVFHR is grateful for the support of the following foundations and groups in 2011: European Instrument on Democracy and Human Rights, The Atlantic Philanthropies, and the Swedish Amnesty Fund.

Submitted by

Jeanne Bishop
Treasurer

Catherine Brady
Bookkeeper

**Murder Victims Families for Human Rights
Profit & Loss January 1 through December 31, 2011**

Income	
Contributions Income	28,351
Grants	303,766
Expense Reimbursements	600
Interest	<u>140</u>
Total Income	<u><u>332,857</u></u>
Expense	
Personnel	211,169
Travel	83,653
Telecommunications	2,654
Equipment & Supplies	1,477
Books, Subscriptions, Refence	124
Occupancy & Insurance	8,319
Bank Service Charges	945
Printing	9,211
Professional Fees	9,298
Postage & Delivery	1,514
Conferences & Meetings	2,959
Visibility Actions	754
Fees & Registrations	398
Miscellaneous	<u>355</u>
Total Expense	<u><u>332,830</u></u>
Net Income	<u><u><u>27</u></u></u>

Balance Sheet as of 12/31/11

ASSETS

Current Assets

Bank of America 153,118

Other Current Assets

Deposits 906

Refunds Due 1,699

Prepaid Expenses 6,340

Total Other Current Assets 8,944

Total Current Assets 162,062

Fixed Assets

Furniture and Equipment 3,312

Accum Depr - Furn and Equip -2,208

Total Fixed Assets 1,104

TOTAL ASSETS 163,166

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities

Current

Liabilities Accounts Payable

Accounts Payable 93

Total Accounts Payable 93

Unearned or Deferred
Credit Cards Revenue 4,016

Other Current Liabilities 106,834

Total Other Current Liabilities 106,834

Total Current Liabilities 110,943

Total Liabilities 110,943

Equity

Fund Balance-Restricted 35,000

Retained Earnings 20,306

Net Income 27

Total Equity 52,223

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY 163,166

Notes:

(1) Funds unearned in 2011 from European Union grant

(2) Atlantic Philanthropies grant receivable