



# Amnesty International

Orange County

GROUP 141 ORANGE • GROUP 175 LONG BEACH  
GROUP 178 IRVINE • GROUP 596 HUNTINGTON BEACH

December 2005

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## The Imminent Execution of Stanley Williams in California

*This article is taken from a September 7, 2005 AIUSA press release.*

On December 13, 2005, the State of California plans to execute Stanley "Tookie" Williams, who has been on San Quentin prison's death row for well over two decades. Williams founded the notorious "Crips" street gang in Los Angeles, California, in the early 1970s. He was sent to death row in 1981 for two separate robbery murders. In one robbery a convenience store clerk was killed and in the other the owners of a motel were killed (father, mother, and grown daughter). Stanley Williams has always asserted his innocence of these specific crimes. Indeed, the United States federal appeals court described his convictions as based upon "circumstantial evidence and the testimony of witnesses with less-than-clean backgrounds and incentives to lie in order to obtain leniency from the state." Amnesty International is not in a position to comment on Stanley Williams' claim of innocence, but would note the ever-growing evidence of wrongful convictions in capital cases in the USA, and that lingering doubt about guilt is itself a solid ground for commutation of a death sentence.<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not Stanley Williams committed the crimes for which he is scheduled to die, by his own admission he participated in violent behaviour before he was sent to prison and during his first seven years there. Then, during six years in solitary confinement, he underwent through focused education what he describes as a "redemptive transition." Since his release from solitary confinement in 1994, he has exhibited exemplary behaviour in prison. In 1997, Williams issued the first of his "apologies", renouncing gang life:

Twenty-five years ago when I created the Crips youth gang with Raymond Lee Washington in South Central Los Angeles, I never imagined Crips membership would one day spread throughout California, would spread to much of the rest of the nation and to cities in South Africa, where Crips copycat gangs have formed. I also didn't expect the Crips to end up ruining the lives of so many young people, especially young black men who have hurt other young black men . . .

[T]oday I apologize to you all—the children of America and South Africa—who must cope every day with dangerous street gangs. I no longer participate in the so-called gangster lifestyle, and I deeply regret that I ever did . . . I pray that one day my apology will be accepted. I also pray that your suffering, caused by gang violence, will soon come to an end as more gang members wake up and stop hurting themselves and others. I vow to spend the rest of my life working

toward solutions.

Stanley Williams has "worked toward solutions" through his public apologies, by writing an award-winning series of children's books that warn about the perils of the gang lifestyle, by writing another book for older children that demythologizes the prison experience (undercutting a myth that prison is some kind of rite of passage for young African-American males), by writing his own autobiography which renounces gang violence, by producing a peace protocol to help street gangs turn to peaceful behaviour, and by founding an internet-based peer mentoring and anti-gang program involving children in the United States, Switzerland, and South Africa. His work played a prominent role in gang truces in Los Angeles and Newark, New Jersey. In 2004, after watching a film that depicts Williams' life *Redemption*, in which the actor Jamie Foxx plays Stanley Williams), over 300 members of the Crips and Bloods gangs in Newark, New Jersey, signed a peace treaty, agreeing to end gang violence. Inspired by Williams' work against violence, a member of the Swiss Parliament has nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. This year, President George W. Bush's Council on Service and Civic Participation bestowed upon Stanley Williams the "Presidential Call to Service Award." The letter congratulating Williams for the award praised him for having contributed to the "build[ing of] a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America." This special award "honors those who have provided more than 4,000 hours of service over the course of their lifetime."

Amnesty International has called upon California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to recognize the extraordinary facts in Stanley Williams' case and commute his death sentence. The alternative would be to send the message to gang members around the world that "there are no second chances in the eyes of justice . . . that in some cases, killing is right."

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### Execution Vigils for Stanley Williams

Death Penalty Focus of California is sponsoring a vigil on the evening of Monday, December 12, at the Circle of Orange, Chapman and Glassell Streets, 5:00 PM–12:15 AM.

There will also be a rally and vigil in Los Angeles. The rally at the Westwood Federal Building, 11000 Wilshire Boulevard, at the corner of Veteran, begins at 6:00 PM, and will be followed by a march at 8:30 PM to St. Thomas the Apostle church, 10750 Ohio Avenue, for a vigil.

For updates and a schedule of other events in California, see the Death Penalty Focus website [www.deathpenalty.org](http://www.deathpenalty.org).

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## November Meeting Minutes

### Group #141 Orange

#### **Western Regional Conference**

Max talked about his trip to the regional conference. It was his first and he found it not only exciting, but very informative. He was able to see and hear Rebiya Kedeer who was the former focus case of the Western Region. Even through the dual translators, he thought she was amazing. He noted she had a sense of sadness, urgency and happiness. Max also went to different workshops including one that he spoke about with great enthusiasm. It was about Indonesia and talked about tactics for action such a letter writing, sponsor a Senator to do a bill and/or write a letter as well as AI people to go and talk to public officials about the situation in Indonesia. For more info on Amnesty's work in Indonesia, please go to <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/indonesia>.

Other workshops and events included viewing movies that can also be seen on PBS later this year. Check listings in 2006 for *The Devil's Miner* and *Taking the Heat: The First Women Firefighters in NYC* as part of the INDEPENDENT LENS series.

#### **Sudan**

Max also passed on some interesting information about the Sudan. Apparently, there has been a greater demand for slaves. It seems that as more slaves are freed/sold, there has been a greater demand to recapture more to increase the income level of the country. I guess this is what blood for money is all about.

#### **Hussein's Trial**

Amnesty has been given observer status at Saddam Hussein's trial to observe a fair trial and justice for victims of abuse, as well as some detainees at Guantanamo Bay (Gitmo).

#### **Gender Violence**

November 25–December 10 has been labeled as "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence." This year's theme is title "For the Health of Women." Check <http://www.amnestyusa.org/women/16days/> for more information.

#### **Death Penalty**

We talked about the upcoming (now passed) 1,000th execution in the U.S. since the death penalty was reinstated. Kenneth Lee Boyd was executed in North Carolina on Friday, December 2. He had been convicted of murdering his wife and father-in-law 17 years ago.

Stanley, "Tookie" Williams is set to be executed in California on December 13. His fate now rests in the hand of Governor Schwarzenegger. See this newsletter for information about events regarding this situation. Go to the website <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/action/index.asp?step=2&item=12414> to take action.

#### **Santa Ana Art Walk Tabling**

Members of the Orange group gathered in Santa Ana for the monthly Art Walk. We set up a table and had petitions, letters, cards, and general information about AI. The response was great. So good, that we had to run to the store to make more copies. It was amazing how many people came over just

to sign their name in solidarity of those whose rights had been abused. For a cold evening, there were MANY warm hearts.

#### **December Meeting**

The Orange group **will not** be meeting on our normal day in December due to the holidays. We will return on January 17, 2006 to continue the struggle for human rights. We hope to see you there!!

#### **Alepho Deng's Essay in Newsweek**

Alepho Deng, one of the lost boys of Sudan, now in San Diego had an essay published in *Newsweek* recently. It can be read on the web site [www.TheyPouredFire.com](http://www.TheyPouredFire.com). You can purchase the book, co-written by AI, Benson, Benjamin and Judy Bernstein at Amazon.com. The book is also called *They Poured Fire*.

#### **Make Some Noise**

The Black Eyed Peas, Avril Lavigne, and The Cure are joining Amnesty International in a ground-breaking musical venture using the works of John Lennon. Make Some Noise, launching on December 10, International Human Rights Day, aims to inspire a new generation to celebrate and stand up for human rights.

The global launch of Make Some Noise will see the release of the Black Eyed Peas' rousing version of Power to the People, The Cure's interpretation of Love, Snow Patrol's recording of Isolation, and Grow Old With Me performed by The Postal Service. All four exclusive singles will be available as online downloads via [www.amnesty.org/noise](http://www.amnesty.org/noise).

These will be followed in early 2006 by an array of iconic Lennon tracks from further top artists, including Avril Lavigne. Amnesty International wants Make Some Noise to encourage a new audience to celebrate and take action for human rights and attract one million new supporters worldwide. All of the contemporary recordings will feature as either single downloads, over the course of the year, or as part of a download compilation album. Due for release in 2006, the compilation will mark one of the greatest music projects of the decade. All profits from music sales will be used to support Amnesty International in its global human rights work.

Make Some Noise follows Yoko Ono's generous donation of the rights to John Lennon's solo songbook to Amnesty International in 2003.

"It's wonderful that, through this campaign, music which is so familiar to many people of my era will now be embraced by a whole new generation," says Yoko Ono. "John's music set out to inspire change, just as Make Some Noise does. In standing up for human rights, we really can make the world a better place."

Irene Khan, Secretary General at Amnesty International, says "We're thrilled to be using John Lennon's songs in our human rights work. We hope this music will bring an awareness of human rights to a new generation. After all, human rights are what make music possible—we wouldn't be able to create music, listen to it or dance to it without freedom of speech, expression, and association."

## November Meeting Minutes

### Group #175 Long Beach

#### Attendees

Dan Bindman, Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Deidre Gaffney, Kevin Gaffney, Bobbi Kendig, Cathleen Kilgallen, Jim Roberts, Steve Wicke

#### Regional Conference: San Francisco

Our lovely Area Coordinator Cathleen told us about her experience at the Amnesty regional conference held the previous weekend. She said it was wonderful and exciting though she found her first resolution process rather daunting and strange (heads nodded knowingly). There was so much time spent on crafting our region's position on reproductive rights that the male circumcision bill was given short shrift (pun not intended!), and some delegates were not happy. It was mentioned at the meeting that some of the people involved with that issue seemed to have come from outside of the organization but wanted to use Amnesty to further their single agenda.

#### International Council Meeting

Deidre and Kevin presented us with an overview of what happened at the International Council Meeting (ICM) in Mexico this year. (The ICM is the biennial meeting of the international Amnesty sections.) The importance of local groups and using their resources and the expertise of members was cited. Pledges were made to consult more with membership in general. Human rights education (HRE) objectives were stated and resources were mandated. Amnesty will take a position on calling for armed intervention (Kevin gave details on the way this could go). Reproductive rights were discussed. Sections are being polled / voting on their positions (as Cathleen told us about our regional). Some issues mentioned are reproductive rights as a health right as well as quality of services.

The ICM will now take place every three years but a new structure (like an executive committee) was put in place to handle issues and crises that arise between meetings. In addition, voting numbers of the ICM were restructured so that smaller sections will be given more say.

#### Death Penalty

We talked about the upcoming execution of Stanley Tookie Williams. Mary Kay brought an encouraging article from the *Los Angeles Times*. On October 27 they had an editorial calling for an end to the death penalty in California!

#### Torture Campaign

Steve gave a presentation on the torture campaign and presented everyone with a nifty folder of information and petitions. He cited a recent poll that said 38% of Americans believe torture is okay in talking about how, surprisingly, a campaign against torture isn't as easy as you would think. We had lots

of discussion about the campaign. Norma mentioned how she can't ever remember the name of the campaign and gets it confused with our work on the "war on terror." Jim lamented that the focus of a torture campaign seems to be entirely on the United States. Dan said perhaps Amnesty needs to focus on the U.S. as we are the superpower and supposedly set the standard for the rest of the world. Steve told us that 40,000 insurgents have now been arrested. He also told us about a press conference in London (11/17) that would feature released detainees.

#### Group News

- The group sent 74 letters and two postcards.
- We talked about current events in Burma (moving capitals, etc.).

#### Special Meeting in December

On our December meeting day, December 21, the group will meet at Saigon Express in Lakewood to eat and sign holiday cards. Saigon Express is located at 4501 E. Carson Street. It is at the corner of Carson and Norse Way and just a block east of Lakewood Boulevard. Join us at 7:00 PM!

## Holiday Write-a-Thon

Join us—thousands of Amnesty International members, groups and friends around the world—by participating in AI's annual Global Write-a-thon.

This international solidarity event was initiated by activists at AI-Poland on December 10, 2002 in commemoration of International Human Rights Day. Last year, AI activists from over thirty countries wrote letters during the Global Write-a-thon. The letters and postcards they wrote effected powerful change in the lives of individuals, helped stop violence against women and contributed to the release of Prisoners of Conscience around the world.

The Orange County and Long Beach Amnesty International groups are sponsoring a Holiday Write-a-thon on International Human Rights Day, Saturday, December 10. This will be held 3:00–9:00 PM, at Sts. Simon and Jude Parish, 20444 Magnolia, in Huntington Beach.

You are encouraged to bring non-religious cards or postcards and stamps. We will provide pasta, pizza, and salad at 5:00 PM. Please feel free to bring an appetizer or dessert.

For more information, contact Darcie Olson at (949) 742-5524 or [c\\_olson@onebox.com](mailto:c_olson@onebox.com).

## December Meetings

Please note that the Orange, Huntington Beach, and Irvine groups will not be meeting in December, but will be participating in the December 10 Write-a-Thon. All three groups will resume their regular monthly meetings in January.

If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter and supporting the work of the Orange County and Long Beach Amnesty International groups, please return this coupon to the address shown with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues cover the costs of this newsletter and of stamps used for saving lives. Your address label contains your membership expiration date. Join us!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to:**  
 Amnesty International  
 Group 178  
 P.O. Box 14485  
 Irvine, CA 92623-4484

**For (check one):**  
 Orange Group  
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 Huntington Beach  
 Long Beach

Please make your check payable to Amnesty International. Contributions to AI are tax-deductible. Thank you for your interest and support!

# Calendar

## December

10 Saturday

**International Human Rights Day**

10 Saturday 3:00–9:00 PM

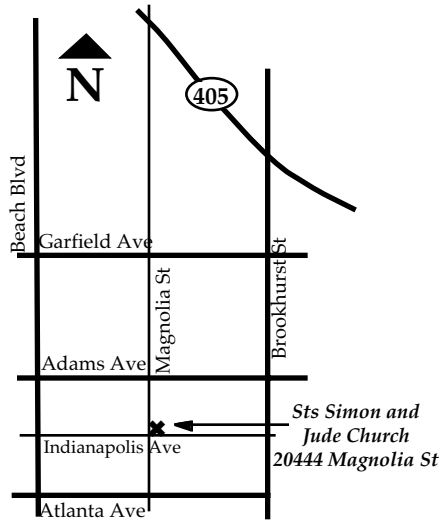
**Holiday Write-a-thon** at Sts. Simon and Jude Parish, 20444 Magnolia, Huntington Beach. For more information, see the article in this newsletter.

12 Monday 5:00 PM–12:15 AM

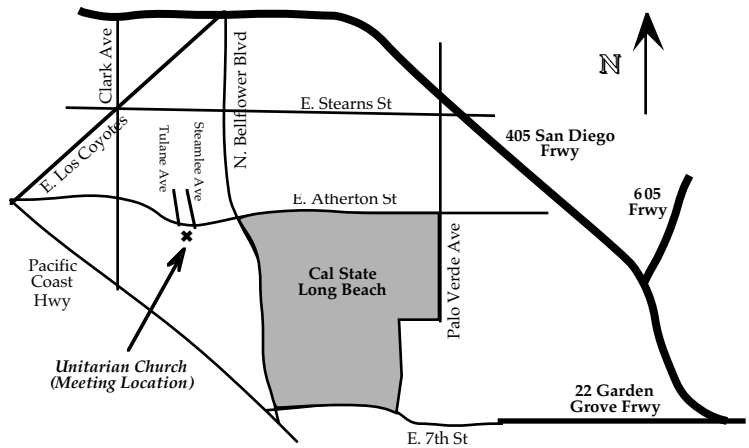
**Williams Execution Vigil** at Circle of Orange, Chapman and Glassell Streets. For more information, see the article in this newsletter.

21 Wednesday 7:00 PM

**Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting** at Saigon Express restaurant, 4501 E. Carson Street, in Lakewood, at the corner of Carson and Norse Way, a block east of Lakewood Boulevard. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.



**Holiday Write-a-thon Location**



**Group #175 Long Beach Meeting Location**

Amnesty International  
Group 178  
P.O. Box 14485  
Irvine, CA 92623-4484