

Senator Julie Gonzales

Senator Jack Tate

Colorado State Capitol

200 E. Colfax

Denver, CO 80203

My name is Kelli Parsons. I was an employee of CDOC for thirteen years. I began in 1987 as a Senior Secretary and left the Department in 2001 as an Administrative Program Specialist. The program I worked on was Accreditation. As an accreditation manager I brought my assigned facility up for accreditation and audited the other facilities in the state to determine their compliance with ACA Standards. ACA standards are certain standards a facility must meet or exceed to become accredited. They cover every facet of facilities such as nutrition, staff training, counts, religious programs, temperature of showers, decibels of and sound, facility security, etc.

In the early 90s I was promoted to Centennial Correctional Facility. At the time CCF was the only max/ad seg facility and it housed death row. Colorado State Penitentiary was in the process of being built. As an auditor I inspected the entire facility, CCF, on a regular basis. That included going to A Unit which housed death row. At that time, Gary Lee Davis, Frank Rodriguez and Ron White were the only inmates on Death Row.

Any time a death date came down, the facility began preparations. We would have meetings and review an envelope that held the highly confidential details of how the death penalty would be carried out. We all knew that the likelihood of an actual execution would not be any time soon due to the appeals process.

In 1993 CSP was finished and Death Row was transferred. A few years thereafter a solid death date came down for Mr. Davis. I was contacted by Central Office and assigned to be part of the execution team. I was assigned to be in the command center which was staged at the Warehouse in the East Canon Complex. I would be in the command center with the Executive Director as well as other high ranking officials.

We started having meetings to get our assignments. We did a walk-through of the death chamber. I remember how crowded it seemed to be in there with the entire team. Then we went to the Warehouse to further prepare. A retired Warden walked in and started laughing and high fiving people. He wanted to be part of the process. It was at that time that it occurred to me that this was so much more than something on paper. We were about to kill a man and it was turning into a circus. People were losing sight of the mission. After much soul searching I contacted Central Office and asked to be removed from the team. I was offered 2 other possible positions but both involved contact with the media and it occurred to me that my kids

might see me on TV and asked why I helped kill a man. I declined any participation whatsoever in the execution.

The night of the execution I did everything I could to distract myself. I took my daughter for a caramel apple and drove around. Later, I finally went home and turned on the news. I watched as the hearse left DOC property carrying the body of Mr. Davis. And I wept. I heard that the coroner, Dorothy Twellman, wept when she called time of death.

The next day I was back at work. I walked in to a mess in the conference room; the execution had been catered. Food was delivered to the press in the visiting trailer and to each facility's administration, as each facility had to have its administrative staff in house. In our conference room there were deli trays laying about, left there for the inmate porters to clean up. I thought it kind of vulgar they had to clean up after we'd killed one of their friends. I remember that day was very quiet and somber. My office overlooked the mall where the inmates walked to cellhouses, programs, recreation, etc. As I looked out my window I saw inmate and staff, all very quiet and they appeared to be withdrawn. Nobody was celebrating.

I talked to a Captain who was visibly struggling. He had worked in A Unit and had talked to Mr. Davis almost daily about football, religion, the weather, whatever. The Captain and I talked and cried. On the night of the execution, at midnight, all the inmate in all the facilities rattled their cell doors in solidarity with Mr. Davis.

When I was hired by the DOC, execution wasn't even a consideration. We hadn't had one in years. When I hired I had no idea that some day I might be called upon to participate in one. And when that day did come, I could not do it. I tried to do the job I was assigned but was unable to. And that's when I realized I was no longer apathetic about a potential execution. I was now firmly against the Death Penalty. I saw how the execution affected seasoned staff and inmates. I wouldn't wish that pain on anyone.

Sincerely,

Kelli L. Parsons

Lori Janssen

On September 29, 1991, my brother murdered my mother and my father. That night they were sleeping in separate beds because they both were sick and they were trying not to keep the other one awake. This allowed my brother the opportunity to beat my mom to death, and then my dad.

My brother did not have a diagnosable mental illness. My mom and dad tried for years, through various programs and organizations, to help him. During the judicial phase after the event, he underwent many screenings and tests to determine his mental capacity. But the professionals could not find what they needed either to provide him with a defense or even to explain his decisions that night.

During the initial few months while these tests being completed, the public defender was trying to establish a defense and the district attorney was trying to make sure the prosecution would stick.

The subject of pursuing the death penalty was tossed around a bit. The deputy district attorneys asked me how I felt about pursuing the death penalty. They were very clear about what would be involved: lots of time in court, then appeals, and then the unlikelihood that an execution would even take place.

For these reasons, from a logistical standpoint, it did not make sense to me to pursue an execution. Even so, I spent a lot of time in those few days thinking about how I felt about the death penalty generally. Until that time, I only had superficial thoughts regarding executions. It is easy to be horrified by the crimes in the newspapers and to be swept up in anger, but not bother to give thought to the logistical and moral ramifications of the death penalty in any detail.

As I thought about the death penalty in regard to my brother, I realized it was not a punishment I could support. Clearly, he needed to be separated from society, but to allow the state to kill him would not be what my heroic mom and dad would have wanted, and would bring a lot of shame to me. I say shame, because I would have been supporting his execution because of my own anger and grief.

He ended up pleading guilty to all charges, and was sentenced to 4 consecutive life terms plus over 200 years.

After he was sentenced, it was time or me to shut the door on him. It was time to turn the page on all of the years he had tormented me and my parents, and to try to make peace with the final nightmare that he dropped in my lap. He ended up dying in 2008. If he had been on death row, he probably would still be working on appeals and keeping me in and out of court for those 17 years.

I was fortunate that law enforcement and the victim services departments of the Jefferson County Sheriff, as well as the Jefferson County DA's Peter Weir and Charles Tingle, were so supportive. I believe that their support was a springboard for me to be able to begin healing.

Once someone is killed and the murderer incarcerated, support and rebuilding for those of us left behind is crucial. I have to wonder whether the huge amounts of taxpayer money spent on the death penalty phases could be better used to help the survivors of the violence to rebuild as much

as possible, or to develop programs to help at risk youth before they become violent offenders, and maybe even to rehabilitate nonviolent offenders who are clogging our prisons so they have a more successful transition to public life.

A person who experienced this kind of trauma - it lasts a lifetime. At this point I have lived without my family longer than I lived with them. I spent lots of my young adulthood simply healing, and working through the fallout of PTSD.

Despite the horror he brought me, I remain solid in my belief that my turning away from the death penalty option was the right thing to do. I think there is a lot of redemption and grace in being able to separate feelings of anger and trauma with objective decisions about the faulty policies that are supported by a justice system that tries to make people whole, but is plagued by its own unsound practices.

Those of us carrying pain and trauma will always have to do so. A successful adjudication might help, but no punishment for the offender can lessen the healing that has to be done for a successful life for those of us still alive, that hold the memories that matter. There is no such thing as closure. Grief only changes shape.

Depending on the state and federal government to make our lives whole again is a huge mistake.

As Ronald Reagan said, "the most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help."

Statement of Bob Autobee

My name is Robert Autobee, I've been involved with the DP about 18yrs, when my son was killed by an inmate while working at the Limon Cor. Fac. At that time I was in favor of the DP. I thought our judicial system was capable of providing justice. Until you've witnessed how dysfunctional and incompetent our judicial system is, will you realize just how the DP promotes hate, racism and apathy. After 10 yrs. we were going to start the trial over. It was at that point where my family had enough. We could not longer rely on the system. My wife and son forgave. I could not. Finally I seen that the DP was wrong. I told the new DA we could not support the DP any longer. I began my fight against the DP. I believe the dignity of life is worth fighting for.

I've been from coast to coast fighting the DP and have seen the epidemic of hate racism and apathy that is taking over our nation.

I believe we are failing our children by allowing our elected officials to influence our children by promoting hate, racism and apathy. It is our duty to stand up against injustice if we Don't they will not and their children will not. Hate, racism and apathy our not the values we should be promoting.

It takes a better person to not kill than it does to kill. Which one are you? Thank you.