



ABOLITION NOW!

**national lawyers guild
student day against the death penalty**

What will you do for the abolition movement this year? On March 2, 2009 National Lawyers Guild student chapters across the country will collectively raise our voices to mark NLG Law Student Day Against the Death Penalty (SDADP). Please join us.

Throughout 2008 and during the first weeks of 2009, death penalty abolitionists faced highs and lows as the capital punishment continued to be a hot topic of very real consequence:

- *For first time since 1959, New Hampshire decided it will use the death penalty. Michael Addison was sentenced to death, the first such sentence returned under the state's capital murder law which went into effect in 1991.*
- *Of international note, Puerto Rican Abolitionist Charles Elroy Laplace was hanged by the government of St. Kitts. This was the first execution in the English speaking Caribbean since 2000. Sadly, the senate of St. Kitts' neighbor, Jamaica, voted to retain capital punishment.*
- *However, on a positive note, the use of capital punishment in the United States continues to wane noticeably: state and federal courts executed 37 inmates, a 14-year low. Courts sentenced 111 people to death in 2008—the lowest number of new condemnations in three decades.*

This renewed debate gives those of us working to abolish the death penalty the opportunity to present compelling arguments in favor of abolition to our colleagues in law school and people in our communities.

To help you generate ideas, this year's online packet—viewable at <http://www.nlg.org/deathpenalty/>—includes a page of **Ideas for Action** as well as an accounting of what NLG chapters did last year. A **Yellow Pages** resource lists useful websites, organizations, and programs you can contact for speakers; a **Press Release template** provides a rough draft for your own media work.

I have also included the **Death Penalty Information Center's year-end report**. Please refer to the Center's excellent website at deathpenaltyinfo.org for comprehensive news and statistics. Lastly, we have some news regarding **the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, one of the NLG's Jailhouse Lawyer Vice-Presidents**. In December, Mumia's lead attorney Robert R Bryan filed a petition for writ of certiorari to the U. S. Supreme Court. The issues presented include racism in jury selection and the prosecutor's misrepresentations to the jury during the 1982 guilt phase. Meanwhile, the Philadelphia District Attorney seeks a reversal of the Third Circuit's decision granting a new jury trial on the death penalty sentencing. Mr. Bryan has filed a brief in opposition to their death penalty argument.

Please remember to email me at studentorg@nlg.org with details of your chapter's plans for SDADP. Thanks for your important contribution to the abolition movement.

In Solidarity,

Michel Angela Martinez