

Resolution of the Social Justice Committee (SJC) of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville (UUCR) on Maryland's Campaign to End the Death Penalty.

December 2012

Whereas this campaign fits within our UU Principles and Purposes: the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) affirm the "inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity and compassion in human relations," as well as "the goal of world community with peace, and justice for all"; and

Whereas the UUA has opposed capital punishment since 1961 through a series of resolutions, an Action of Immediate Witness in 2000, and a 2005 Statement of Conscience, the resolutions having urged member congregations "to exert all reasonable efforts toward the elimination of capital punishment"; and the 2000 Action of Immediate Witness on the Death Penalty having urged member congregations "to engage actively in efforts to eliminate the death penalty, to work with other organizations in this effort, and to increase efforts to persuade punishment"; and

Whereas there is ample evidence that the death penalty is applied in a racist manner: in Maryland, the death penalty has been applied exclusively for homicides of white victims, even though more than 75 percent of homicide victims in the state are African American; and

Whereas death sentences are generally reserved for the poor: nationally, more than 90 percent of persons facing capital charges cannot afford their own attorney; and

Whereas the prosecution of capital homicide cases diverts resources from other state-run programs: a capital homicide trial in Maryland costs approximately three times that of a life imprisonment trial, and the death penalty abolition bill that will be introduced in the Maryland General Assembly will funnel a portion of the cost savings to resources for families of murder victims; and

Whereas, the risk of executing an innocent person remains large: 141 people nationally have been released from death row upon exoneration;

Therefore, the UUCR SJC endorses the Maryland campaign to end the death penalty during the 2013 legislative session and encourages and supports the efforts of the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland in this campaign.