



## The Constitution Project's Clearinghouse of New Voices for Criminal Justice Reform

### Statement of Evangelical Leaders on The Constitution Project's New Report *Irreversible Error*

As members of diverse Evangelical communities, we applaud The Constitution Project Death Penalty Committee's extensive and sober review of our country's death penalty system found in its new report, *Irreversible Error*, released just last week. While searching and thoughtful discourse on the morality of capital punishment is a critical discussion that should continue in all communities of faith, this new report provides us with new – and troubling – information about the reality of the death penalty in America.

Our members are not a monolith. Our faith communities vary on whether the Bible permits society to take the life of another. But we all agree that sunlight must be shown on how this punishment is actually meted out in our country. What this report shows us is that from arrest all the way through the execution process, our system is rife with unfairness and injustice. Even for those of us who believe Scripture permits executions, *Irreversible Error* illustrates vexing problems concerning its just implementation. It reveals an arbitrary, unfair system that too often kills the least among us, sometimes without sufficient evidence of guilt.

Evangelicals are committed to biblical principles of justice, which require proportionality in sentencing, a fair judicial process, and – above all – certainty of guilt. We are also mindful of our core commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Lord, and remember his own unjust execution whenever we think about the death penalty. We call on our communities and congregations to move quickly to examine the findings of the *Irreversible Error* report and to help implement its recommendations, wherever the death penalty is imposed.

Signatories as of 5/15/2014:

**Vincent Bacote**

Associate Professor of Theology and Director of the Center for Applied Christian Ethics, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL

**Paul A. Brink**

Professor of Political Theory and Comparative Politics, Department of Political Science, Gordon College, Wenham, MA

**Jacob Cook**

Associate Director, Just Peacemaking Initiative, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA

**Robert Gittelson**

Vice President for Governmental Affairs, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, Sacramento, CA

**David P. Gushee**

Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics; Director, Center for Theology and Public Life, Mercer University, Macon, GA

**Sarah Withrow King**

Deputy Director, The Sider Center, Evangelicals for Social Action, Wayne, PA

**Stephen Monsma**

Senior Research Fellow, The Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI

**Roger E. Olson**

Foy Valentine Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University, Waco, TX

**Gabriel Salguero**

President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition; Pastor, The Lamb's Church, New York, NY

**James Slack**

Professor, Robertson School of Government, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA

**Al Tizon**

Co-President, Evangelicals for Social Action, Wayne, PA

**Mary Veeneman**

Assistant Professor, Biblical & Theological Studies, North Park University, Chicago, IL

**Jim Wallis**

President and Founder, Sojourners; Editor-in-chief, *Sojourners* Magazine, Washington, DC

**Charles Watson, Jr.**

Ordained Baptist Minister, Alexandria, VA