

Mass Murderer G.W. Bush Executes Gary Graham

For weeks, GOP Presidential candidate George W. Bush has been telling the world that, in Texas, none of the 135 men and women executed under his administration has been innocent of the crime for which they were executed. Now, that has changed. On June 22, Governor Bush executed Gary Graham, also known as Shaka Sankofa, convicted 19 years ago of a murder which Graham said he did not commit.

Graham, Bush's 135th victim, faced death nine times in Texas, winning a reprieve the first eight because of the huge doubts about his guilt. His conviction was based exclusively on one eyewitness account, a woman who saw the shooting from inside her car, at night, in the course of less than a minute.

Two other eyewitnesses, employees at the Safeway who watched the shooter for 15-20 minutes inside the

store, said Graham was not the shooter. They were never called to testify, because Graham, poor and black, had an incompetent attorney. There was no physical evidence against Graham, and the gun found on him at the time of arrest was not the weapon used in the shooting.

Some of the original jurors in the Graham trial have recently said that, today, knowing what they now know, they would have voted against the death penalty.

Gary Graham was not an angel. He was involved in low-level street crime, and pled guilty to that. But he wasn't guilty of the crime for which he was executed. Graham told ABC News, "This system is a disgrace to any civilized country, when you talk about the innocent people that are being killed here."

George W. Bush said that he believes in the death penalty because it "saves lives." There are 15 more people on death row in Texas scheduled for execution before the November Presidential election. If he believes in saving lives, there are 15 he could start with right there. The 135 he has already taken, testify that he is the nation's chief executioner, and a mass murderer.—*Marianna Wertz*

What About Gore?

That George W. Bush is the nation's chief executioner is not in doubt. That's what you get if you vote for him. But what about Gore?

Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen, a death-penalty and Bush opponent, had an unusually (for him) insightful column on this question on June 13, titled "Al with His Finger in the Wind." "If Gore were an American Indian of yore," he writes, "his name would be Al Finger-in-the-Wind. How silent is he? As silent as the dead. Never mind that Gore won't open up on Bush; he won't even lend his name to a Senate effort [The Innocence Protection Act of 2000] to ensure that inmates have access to any DNA evidence that might prove them innocent. . . . Gore is the very model of the very modern leader—self-proclaimed and daring to take the public where it already wants to go. I understand. The politics of the issue are simple. Alas, so is its morality."

In a June 14 interview with the *New York Times*, where he was forced to deal with the issue publicly for the first time, Gore said, "If there is a study that shows a large number of mistakes, that has to make you uncomfortable."

Uncomfortable? I guess so, particularly if you are innocent and strapped to a gurney with lethal drugs running through your veins.

Gore continued, "There are many who bring an understandable passion to the new debate over capital punishment that arises from their fundamental moral opposition to the penalty itself. I deeply respect that position. I do not share it. . . . I do think that that penalty should be available."

Gore said, finally, that he would support a Federal morato-

rium "if there were, in the Federal courts, the kind of record that Governor Ryan found in Illinois. . . . I do not believe the evidence show that's the case." Sounds a lot like Bush, doesn't it?

In fact, Al and George, the evidence *does* show that's the case. Read the Columbia University study.

Interview: Robert Wilkins

Stop D.C. Sentencing Bill, Keep Parole

On June 26, the District of Columbia City Council is expected to open debate on legislation that goes even further in its harsh sentencing provisions than the Gingrich Congress mandated in the 1997 Revitalization Act, under which the Federal government bailed out and took over several arms of District administration. The Sentencing Reform Act of 2000, if voted up as written, would, beginning in August, abolish parole for all felonies, eliminate rehabilitative programs for youthful offenders charged with violent crimes, and lengthen prison sentences, allowing judges to impose even longer sentences than required under current law.

Incarceration levels in the nation's capital are already