



Amnesty International

Group 524

July 2021



No July Meeting / Group 39 Picnic Break the Cycle of Violence Act Alabama Prisoner Rocky Myers

Welcome and Group 39 Summer Picnic

Along with the July heat and storms, two letter actions are highlighted this month. Group 39 Pittsburgh is planning an outdoor potluck picnic at a park shelter on **August 12**. If interested in attending, please contact me (joheb@aol.com) for details.

Break the Cycle of Violence Act

Back in April we wrote to our representatives asking them to re-introduce this important legislation in both Houses and now it has been done. Details are on page 2 along with our Congressmen and Senators addresses for the model letter on page 3.

Alabama Death Penalty Prisoner Rocky Myers

Rocky Myers has been on Alabama's death row at Homan Correctional Facility in Atmore, AL, for nearly half his life. Serious flaws have affected his case including racial and class bias, inadequate legal representation, and allegations of police pressure. Amnesty is urging Alabama Governor Kay Ivey to intervene and immediately review Rocky Myers' case. On July 16th, Rocky turned 60, and activists across the world are mobilizing to wish him a happy birthday and to urge Governor Ivey to commute his death sentence. Details are on page 4 and a model letter is on page 5.

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Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Providence Heights

9000 Babcock Blvd., Allison Park, PA 15101



Contact John Belch (joheb@aol.com or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site (www.amnestypgh.org).



Break the Cycle of Violence Act Reintroduced in Congress

The Break the Cycle of Violence Act has been re-introduced in both the House and Senate and would authorize \$625 million in annual investment (\$5 billion over eight years) for effective violence intervention programs. The formula behind Break the Cycle of Violence Act's federal funding for violence intervention grants follows the same methodology and rationale as was presented to President Biden in advance of his announcement regarding allocation of funding for violence intervention programs. It represents the amount of estimated funding it would cost to treat a gun violence injury multiplied by the average annual gun homicides in the U.S. and then targets the funding around the 48 U.S. cities with the worst rates of violence.

Investment in lifesaving, tailored, public health-based, and holistic violence intervention programs for those communities most impacted by gun violence, can save lives and address trauma in highly impacted areas. By supporting funding that invests in communities, the Break the Cycle of Violence bill represents a solution that would work towards addressing the U.S. obligation to protect people's human rights to live, to feel safe, and to be free from discrimination.

Addresses:

Senator Patrick Toomey
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Robert Casey
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Representative Michael Doyle
270 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Conor Lamb
1224 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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Dear

As your constituent, I'm asking Congress to commit at least \$5 billion over the next 8 years to community gun violence prevention programs now, and establish a national strategy to address the disproportionate impact this public health crisis has had on communities of color by passing the Break the Cycle of Violence Act.

Community-level firearm violence in the USA disproportionately impacts communities of color. Firearm homicide was the leading cause of death for black men and boys aged 15-34 in 2018, and it was the third leading cause of death for Latino men and boys in the same age range. The flood of gun sales in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to make the pandemic of gun violence even worse.

Research indicates that long-term, adequately funded, evidence-based projects tailored towards specific social, economic and cultural contexts, and working in partnership with the affected communities, can achieve sustained reductions in firearm violence. Congress must support and prioritize programs working to address this urgent human rights and public health crisis.

These programs save lives and make our communities safer and stronger. That is why I support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act as an important step toward addressing this urgent public health and human rights crisis. The Break the Cycle of Violence Act would fund these critical, evidence-driven programs led by community members that are proven to be effective at preventing gun violence.

Persistent gun violence in the United States is denying people their civil and political rights including their right to live, the right to security of person, and the right to be free from discrimination. Gun violence also undermines the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to health and the right to education.

In addition to the unimaginable human toll of gun violence across the country, the economic cost is stunning. Estimates place the annual cost of gun violence at hundreds of billions of dollars every year, including medical and criminal justice expenses. Accordingly, it is not only in the interest of our fundamental human rights, but also your constituents as taxpayers, to robustly fund these programs.

You can make a difference on the crisis of gun violence. As your constituent, I am asking for you to support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act and support Congress allocating at least \$5 billion over the next 8 years to community gun violence prevention and intervention programs.

Sincerely,



ALABAMA DEATH PENALTY PRISONER ROCKY MYERS

Rocky Myers, a Black man, has been on death row in Alabama, USA, since 1994. A nearly all-white jury convicted and sentenced him to life without the possibility of parole for the murder of his white neighbor. The trial judge overrode their decision and imposed a death sentence — a practice now outlawed in Alabama.

Rocky Myers grew up in New Jersey in poverty. At 11, he was diagnosed with an intellectual disability. His assigned lawyer for post-conviction appeals abandoned his case without notice, making him miss key deadlines for judicial appeals. The courts relied primarily on IQ tests, a standard which the US Supreme Court found to be inadequate in 2014, to reject his request for a deadline extension submitted on the grounds that he had an intellectual disability.

No evidence linked Rocky Myers to the murder, except for a VCR stolen from the victim, which he maintains he had found abandoned in the street. Key testimonies against him were tainted by inconsistencies and allegations of police pressure, with one later recanted as untrue. Rocky Myers faced execution in 2004 and 2012. On July 16th, Rocky turned 60, and activists across the world are mobilizing to wish him a happy birthday and to urge Governor Ivey to commute his death sentence.

If desired, birthday cards can be sent to:

Rocky Myers, AIS 0000Z563
Holman Correctional Facility, M-44
Holman 3700
866 Ross Road
Atmore, AL 36503 – USA

Please include the full sender's address, as it might otherwise result in the rejection of your mail.

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Governor Kay Ivey
Alabama State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Governor Ivey,

I am greatly concerned by the many flaws that have affected the case of Rocky Myers, who is currently on death row at Holman Correctional Facility in Atmore, Alabama. I urge you to intervene and ensure that his case is immediately reviewed and the death sentence commuted, ending the injustice that has tarnished Rocky Myers' case for more than a quarter of a century.

Rocky Myers was convicted by a nearly all-white jury who sentenced him to life without the possibility of parole for the murder of his white neighbor. The trial judge overrode their decision and imposed a death sentence – a practice now outlawed in Alabama. No evidence linked him to the murder of which he was convicted, except for a VCR stolen from the victim, which he maintains he had found abandoned in the street. Key testimonies against him were tainted by inconsistencies and allegations of police pressure, with one later recanted as untrue.

Aged 11, Rocky Myers was diagnosed with an intellectual disability and reads at primary school level. His assigned lawyer for post-conviction appeals abandoned his case without notice, making him miss key deadlines for judicial appeals. The courts relied primarily on IQ tests, a standard which the US Supreme Court found to be inadequate in 2014, to reject his request for a deadline extension submitted on the grounds that he is a person with an intellectual disability. Racial and class bias also affected the proceedings against him.

Rocky Myers faced execution in 2004 and 2012. As the Governor of Alabama, you can use the power of clemency to alleviate the flaws in the case against him that the criminal justice system could not address and even heightened. I urge you to halt all executions in the state and conduct a review of the case of Rocky Myers as well as of others on death row including those affected by similar concerns, with a view to commuting their death sentences.

Yours sincerely,