

# Anti-death penalty resolve remains in spite of tragic, personal loss

“What seeds do we sow, and who reaps the harvest?” are questions Carolyn Zimmerman, SCLA, poses as she staunchly advocates against the death penalty. She also points out that people believe survivors of murder victims support the death penalty.

Carolyn is living proof and witness that this is not always the case.

In January 1969, her 54-year-old Father was brutally murdered in Warrensburg, Mo. He spoke his last words to his wife and family from the accounting and tax office that he had recently opened and where he was working late on a wintry evening. His message to his wife that she didn't need to pick him up, and that he would take a taxi home may have prevented her from his fate.

Carolyn's Father never came home. The safe in his office was empty. He was missing for three weeks when a farmer found his body in a field. He had been stabbed multiple times. Evidence pointed to more than one perpetrator, but no suspects were ever found.

Carolyn was a young adult living with her husband and two children in Robbinsdale, Minn., but her three younger siblings, ages 10 to 20, were



Carolyn Zimmerman, SCLA, with Ben Jeffries, Kansas Coalition against the Death Penalty.

still living at home. Looking back, she said, “Life changed for our whole family with my Dad's death.”

What didn't change was Carolyn's resolve that the death penalty should be abolished. While she's very empathetic for the pain families experience and astonished at how they manage to survive their losses, she observed, “Hatred and the desire for revenge cannot restore justice and are unlikely to bring either comfort or peace.” She believes “there are better seeds to sow that can help make our world a better place.”

In a presentation sponsored earlier this year at the Leavenworth library by the Kansas Coalition against the Death Penalty, Carolyn catalogued many good reasons to abolish the death penalty. Among them, she listed:

- The staggering cost to taxpayers and dollars that could be diverted to help families of victims.
- Proof that capital punishment does not deter crime.
- Wrongful executions.
- The role that race, poverty and politics play in deciding who lives and dies.
- Religious beliefs against capital punishment.

“With views favoring capital punishment, the United States is in the company of countries we consider abusers of human rights,” Carolyn said.

### TAKE ACTION

**If you are in favor of abolishing the death penalty and live in one of the 34 states where capital punishment remains the law, take action by:**

- Writing your state legislators to let them know what you think.
- Making abolition of the death penalty a pertinent issue in your community.
- Joining your voice with a local or statewide effort, e.g., in Kansas, Kansas Coalition against the Death Penalty, [www.ksabolition.org](http://www.ksabolition.org).