



Death Penalty Discourse Network

Dead Man Walking School Theatre Project

Dear Young Americans and Teachers,

To widen the circle of public discourse on the death penalty in our country we are extending and expanding our invitation to schools across the country to produce Tim's stage play *Dead Man Walking*, based on Sister Helen Prejean's book. When the film hit theaters around the country in 1996, we were amazed at the way it provoked discussion on the death penalty. Like the film, we have also shaped the stage play to encourage discourse and discovery regarding this very important issue.

Since the fall of 2004, over 65 schools have performed the play with fantastic results. Now with your help we'd like to expand this invitation even further across our nation through your many networks: campus newspapers, student/campus associations, school theatre and academic associations, as well as related academic community networks. Word about this unique Play Project is beginning to spread, but we believe that it will be your energy and knowledge of the schools, publications, and associations in your communities that will multiply this invitation beyond our wildest dreams.

In entrusting the play to you our only requirements are that schools who participate:

1. Involve at least two other academic departments (law, sociology, humanities, criminal justice, etc) to provide courses related to the death penalty and include Sister Helen's first book, *Dead Man Walking*, in the syllabus, as well as her most recent book *The Death of Innocents*.
2. On an optional basis, we invite the art and music departments to sponsor creative projects on the issue (the CD of *Dead Man Walking*, reissued by Sony, may spark the imaginations of musicians and future composers).
3. Give us feedback on the play: what worked or didn't work, creative initiatives that you did on campus or with other schools or community organizations, and suggestions on how to expand the discourse on campus and in your local community.
4. To not produce the play for commercial gain.

As we move into the third year of this outstanding project, we are constantly inspired by the creativity and talent that we've seen throughout the United States. In reversing the way plays are presented to the American public we see the power of local communities and their ability to affect discussion and emotionally move audiences.

We hope that you will join us in this unprecedented theatre enterprise.

To participate in this project simply contact the Play Project Coordinator, Maureen Fenlon, at 504-940-6583 or email her at playproject@dpcdiscourse.org. Check out our Web site at www.dmwplay.org and listen to the audio clips (click the Make Theatre tab on the website) where I (Tim) talk about the Play Project and how it evolved. Also, you can talk with me, Sister Helen, on my blog at <http://sisterhelen.typepad.com/blog>. We are presently developing our website to enable schools, students, theatre directors, and faculty to communicate with each other and with us.

Sincerely,