

EXECUTING GRACE ENDORSEMENTS

“Shane Claiborne’s new book is extraordinary. With the wit and welcome of all his writing, Shane masterfully makes his case that grace is preferable to killing. Giving us stories and statistics, Shane draws on economics, biblical scholarship, testimonies, politics, and prophetic theology as he delivers a heavy blow to the death machine. As well-researched as it is timely, *Executing Grace* brings everyone into the conversation—victims and offenders, exonerated and executed, wardens and governors, families and friends. The death penalty best beware—this book won’t cause a ripple but a wave. Read it at your own risk: you won’t be the same when you’re done. “

—Michael T. McRay
Author of *Where the River Bends*

“Some days I still have to take a deep breath, hold it and pray silently that those ugly apparitions will go away. *Executing Grace* should be regarded as a warning to those becoming involved in American ceremonial killings. In the middle of the night it’s just too late to reach out and blame it on the system. Mr. Claiborne’s portrait of executions is so vivid one can smell death oozing from the chamber.”

Ron McAndrew
CPM Prison & Jail Consultant

“*Executing Grace* is about redemption. In these pages, Shane Claiborne exposes the harm that the death penalty does to us as humans—to executioners, judges, governors, to the convicted and the exonerated, and to all of us as citizens. Here is an invitation to build a world where we reject all forms of killing, both legal and illegal. It is a call to join a movement where grace gets the last word. Shane Claiborne’s brilliant book reminds us that without forgiveness, there is no future.”

—Desmond Tutu
Author of *The Book of Forgiving*

“Shane Claiborne is one of the finest storytellers to come out of Appalachia in the 21st century. Because he tells the Gospel story, he is one of America’s great preachers. Because he’s told the stories in this book, he may well join the ranks of

Rachel Carson and John Howard Griffin—storytellers who’ve pricked the conscience of our nation and nudged us toward a more perfect union.”

–Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove
Author of *Strangers at My Door*

“Knowing Shane's hectic schedule, I expected a casual opinion piece on an issue important to him. I was wrong. This is a major contribution—a thorough, carefully researched book on an issue that should be important to all of us. Shane casts the death penalty debate in the light of grace, and makes his case persuasively, creatively, and gracefully.”

–Philip Yancey
Author of *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?*

“The best book on the death penalty since *Dead Man Walking*.”

–Rev. John Dear
Author of *A Persistent Peace*

“If you've never changed your mind, you may have lost it along the way. If you're open to changing your mind, here's a powerful book—intelligent, compassionate, and truly, truly important—by one of the most thoughtful moral voices alive today. Don't miss Shane Claiborne's *Executing Grace*.”

–Brian D. McLaren
Author of *A New Kind of Christianity*

“Shane Claiborne, with his daring speech and his courageous body, every time voices all the right connections between serious evangelical faith and the real issues in God's good world. This book is no exception to his recurring practice! Claiborne will not let us off the hook about the radicality of God's grace. Nor will he look away from the social reality of barbarism masquerading as legality. One can only hope this vigorous, inescapable book will make the difference in practice that it articulates so clearly.”

–Walter Brueggemann
Columbia Theological Seminary

“Shane is my good friend. I love and respect him deeply, and I am so glad he wrote this book. I wish the whole Church would read it. As Christians, we know we believe in grace, but we must struggle with what that means when it comes to the death penalty, especially when we have a system that is as broken as ours is. So please read *Executing Grace* with an open mind and consider if it might be time for us to live without the death penalty. Might it be time for us to repent and turn from death to life?”

–John Perkins

Author of *Let Justice Roll Down*, Civil Rights leader, author, community developer

“I am afraid our Christian moral tradition can never be accused of being consistent. We all quote Jesus according to our culture and according to our self-interest. Shane Claiborne here invites us to be consistently pro life and larger than any one culture! The Christ is always too much for us—too much love and mercy to our small liking—too much for the Right and too much for the Left, in our invariably split universe. This is whole-making at its best!”

–Fr. Richard Rohr

Author of *Falling Upward*

“Powerful, urgent, and right. Solidly biblical and full of wrenchingly gripping stories, this book makes a highly convincing case for ending capital punishment. Every Christian, especially those deeply committed to protect the sanctity of human life, should read it.”

–Ronald J. Sider

Author of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*

“Timely, relevant, inspiring and compelling! *Executing Grace* awakens our imagination to the reality that we can make history by living out this powerful, grace-filled alternative to capital punishment that sees the humanity of every person. This book is a must read for anyone who refuses to let violence and death have the last say!”

–Brenda Salter McNeil

Author of *Roadmap to Reconciliation*

“While there are a number of very important recent books on the death penalty, Shane Claiborne’s *Executing Grace* may be the very best. It could only have been written by someone like Shane—a scholar-activist who has not just studied and read about this problem but over many years has personally engaged all relevant groups of people—family members of both murderers and victims, death row inmates, government leaders, prison wardens, activists, and more. The book is comprehensive, covering scripture, theology, Christian tradition, US law and practice, race, and theories of justice. But perhaps most remarkable is the way Shane weaves together narratives of real people all through the book, people with a variety of experiences and views but especially those whose lives have demonstrated the miracle of grace amid both murder and state killing. This book is not for the faint of heart, because Shane rightly tells real stories of both gruesome murders and gruesome executions. But mainly he takes the reader back to the Way of Jesus, and shows that this Way is incompatible with the death penalty, which must now be ended. An indispensable new work, highly recommended.”

-David P. Gushee

Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics and Director of the Center for Faith and Public Life at Mercer University

"Best book on the death penalty I have read in the thirty years I have been working to abolish the death penalty. This book goes deep, deep into the Bible. It needs to reach the deep, deep into South and it will. The amount of research that has gone into this book is amazing. I ask any Christian who promotes the death penalty to read this book and then begin the debate. This book is the starting point."

-Bill Pelke

President, Journey of Hope...from Violence to Healing

"Executing Grace perfectly encompasses all the emotions that come with the death penalty! Shane Claiborne has managed to beautifully capture views from all those involved from the victim's family, to the inmates and their loved ones, and even the guards inside the prison walls. You won't be disappointed!"

-Cynthia Vaughn

Daughter of murder victim and Tennessee death row prisoner

"With razor-sharp insight, Claiborne rightly divides the Word, with the compelling conclusion that our waning American love for executions cannot be attributed to the God of grace and mercy that is revealed in the Christian Scriptures. Claiborne does not hide in theological clouds, choosing instead to incorporate the human realities of "religiously justified" executions in his exposition. By holding the facts on the ground under the penetrating light of Divine Revelation, he leaves our religious support for capital punishment in ashes. Claiborne takes great care to flesh out the corrupt historical and social context that surrounds politically-valued execution, both as Jesus experienced it and as those killed in our modern American death houses experience it. Then, with the prophetic power of revealed Truth in Scripture, he demolishes the false idols that crave such killing for personal and political gain. It is difficult to imagine how any so-called Scriptural support for the American death penalty will be able to survive Claiborne's passionate biblical scrutiny."

-Brother Dale Recinella

Catholic Correctional Chaplain in Florida's Death Row & Solitary Confinement

"*Executing Grace* is about remembering our humanity in the midst of a culture of death. With no shortcuts or easy answers Shane has called us to wrestle anew with the Gospel and capital punishment. An entire generation of evangelicals will find in this work the radical grip of grace."

-Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero

President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

“Shane Claiborne is a gracist. In his book, *Executing Grace*, he demonstrates that he is powerfully and practically advocating that the red letters of Jesus' words in the Scriptures can become reality if we live out the grace we have been given.”

–David Anderson

Author, radio host, pastor of Bridgeway Community Church

“‘One of the things the death penalty does,’ writes Claiborne, ‘is put death on display.’ Alluding to the bold claim found in Colossians 2:15 that Jesus’ execution somehow ‘disarmed the rulers... and made a public example of them,’ Shane concludes that ‘Love stole the show. Jesus became the water that short-circuited the electric chair.’ This book presses this ancient good news on our world of racism and mass incarceration, in the evangelical hope of weaning church and nation off the spiraling politics of retribution and toward practices of restorative justice.”

–Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

Authors of *Ambassadors of Reconciliation* (2009)

“In this engaging and compelling book, Shane Claiborne calls us—with his characteristic blend of heart and humor, faith and activism, stories and scripture—to recognize that ‘grace offers us a vision for justice that is restorative, and dedicated to healing the wounds of injustice,’ while affirming ‘the grace thing is hard work’ and so requires faith. Whether you have long worked to end the injustice of the Cradle to Prison Pipeline or are just beginning to learn about the tragedy of mass incarceration and the horrors of capital punishment, you will be moved, informed and inspired by Shane’s invitation to the hard, faith-filled work of the ‘grace thing’ our God of love and justice intends.”

–Marian Wright Edelman

Founder of the Children's Defense Fund

“The moral opposition to the death penalty has been deeply Christian, and Sojourners has been part of that. As a life-long opponent of capital punishment, I am very grateful for this book by a new generation Christian leader. In *Executing Grace*, Shane Claiborne clearly and passionately argues that Christians must elevate grace and mercy over revenge. He persuasively makes the deep connection between racial injustice and the death penalty and demonstrates the clear need for Christians to stand up against both. We can end the death penalty; and this book shows how the tide of public opinion is turning. I recommend this book to all who want to follow Jesus, history’s most famous victim of state violence.”

–Jim Wallis

Founder and editor of Sojourners

“Shane is a friend and brother, someone I look to to point me to the way of Jesus. In this book *Executing Grace* Shane has meticulously researched stories and historical

facts. But it doesn't end there. He is constantly bringing a human face to the forefront of this conversation. It's grim and shocking. I was already on his side before reading and now I have read this book I am left with a moral responsibility to add my voice as small as it is to be an advocate for the abolition of the death penalty and for restorative justice. May the 'nagging problem of Jesus' never leave my consciousness."

-Stu Garrard

British guitarist/songwriter/author now living in Nashville

"This compelling and thoughtful book is a must-read for people of faith who have in many ways been painfully silent about excessive punishment in America. Scripture, history and conviction make Shane Claiborne's writing essential for anyone serious about grace and mercy."

-Bryan Stevenson

Founder of Equal Justice Initiative, lawyer, social justice activist

"It seems there are murderous thoughts all about us. We are killing each other's spirits, assassinating the characters of those with whom we disagree. And, of course, we kill the people we hate. With his usual keen insight and stunning storytelling, Shane Claiborne invites us to turn a critical eye on killing, on the death penalty. He invites us to think theologically about restorative justice, and to examine our own deepest convictions about crime, punishment, victims, justice and what our God would have us do. This is important reading for people of faith, important reading for people."

-Jacqui Lewis,

Author, activist, and public theologian

"Shane Claiborne is a friend of mine. He's written a book about love and justice and Jesus. It's also a book about us. Shane knows there's no justice without love and there's no love without justice. His voice is one I've trusted for a long time because he lives what he talks about. Whether you agree with him or not, you'll turn the last page of this book and you'll not just know more, you'll want to do more."

-Bob Goff

Author of *Love Does*

"Shane Claiborne is a courageous spirit filled voice and living embodiment of prophetic activism in the 21st century. His latest book has echoes of philosopher John Rawls, ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr and theologian Martin Luther King, Jr. with a dash of Woody Guthrie."

-Otis Moss III

Senior pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago, Illinois

“Shane Claiborne has again called us to apply the teachings of Jesus to one of the pressing issues of our time—capital punishment. In this well written and meticulously researched book he shows, sociologically, why the death penalty is a flawed penalty for capital crimes and how it demeans the society that practices it.”

–Tony Campolo
Eastern University

“Even though I’ve worked for human rights for decades, Shane’s book inspired me, brought me to tears, made me laugh out loud, but most of all, gave me hope. There IS a way out of our blood lust and he shows that we will find it together. I couldn't put it down.”

–Kathleen Lucas
Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

“Claiborne masterfully weaves together theology, the history of America's death penalty, and firsthand accounts of its devastating effects. These pages are full of hope for a day when the death penalty is gone forever.”

–Sister Helen Prejean
Founder of Witness to Innocence and author of *Dead Man Walking*

“Stark and bright and hopeful and wounding all at the same time, *Executing Grace* is an impassioned call to all those who claim to follow the Executed One. A skillful researcher and compelling narrator, Shane Claiborne invites the reader to delve deeply into the uncomfortable realities of faith and the death penalty. Recognizing that there is no easy answer, the author explores scripture while compassionately engaging in the stories of victims and perpetrators alike.”

–Christena Cleveland
Associate Professor of the Practice of Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School and author of *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*

“This is a necessary book. Death penalty in a civilized state is a scandal. Death penalty is antichristian, antidemocratic and inhuman: ‘You shall not kill!’”

–Jürgen Moltmann
Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen