

# THE LITTLE THINGS

By Lauren Olson  
September 2021



Even though I have been a member of the Death Penalty Abolition/Restorative Justice Issue Team for 11 years, there are still times when I feel overwhelmed by one of our ultimate goals – to abolish the death penalty. Even little snippets of our Mission Statement can smother the best of my intentions at times: “We seek to change hearts and minds concerning this injustice.” If I can barely find time to cook dinner and run errands, how will I have time to transform hearts and minds about something as monumental as the death penalty? How can my efforts possibly abolish an injustice so deeply entrenched in our criminal justice system?

These staggering thoughts always lead me back to the essence of our team and the reason I’ve been a part of it for so long. What makes our issue team unique is that we are a small group of dedicated advocates performing little acts of mercy and education, that when coupled together, can tackle monumental tasks. For example, last year, with the help of NACMS, we published a discussion guide designed to introduce death penalty abolition and restorative justice practices into a faith community meeting. Although the creation of a discussion guide may seem like a “little thing,” it has the potential to achieve the immense goal of “changing hearts and minds concerning this injustice.” [Check out the guide](#) and let us know what you think!

The other “little thing” that has yielded great reward is our team’s constant collaboration with other organizations to accomplish our unified goals. For years, the team has worked closely with the Catholic Mobilizing Network, a national organization that mobilizes Catholics and all people of goodwill to value life over death, to end the use of the death penalty, to transform the U.S. criminal justice system from punitive to restorative, and to build capacity in U.S. society to engage in restorative practices. Whether it’s attending their conferences or sharing their educational materials, the Catholic Mobilizing Network helps me, and our team as a whole, take small steps toward accomplishing our grand goals. For example, Catholic Mobilizing Network’s [“Mercy in Action Project”](#) makes it easy to make a difference by giving you concrete tools to promote clemency for those on death row. After completing a short sign-up form, subscribers receive monthly execution alerts, which include the following:

- A list of upcoming executions
- Contact information for state governors and parole boards
- An easy, one-click clemency letter for you to customize and send
- Resources for prayer

The hidden beauty of the “little things” is that although individuals across the country may feel that their contribution is small, significant strides have been made in working for the abolition of the death penalty because so many people are doing their part in this effort. In fact, since joining the team, six states have abolished the death penalty. With the help of my teammates and our partners, such as the Catholic Mobilizing Network, I feel more empowered, less overwhelmed, and one step closer to achieving our goals of “changing hearts and minds” and making the death penalty an injustice of the past. As Mother Teresa often said, *“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”*