

**August 30, 2015**

*Kelly Gissendaner is an inmate on Georgia's death row who will soon face her third execution date. On Feb. 25, 2015 Kelly's execution was postponed due to snow, and on March 2<sup>nd</sup> it was cancelled again because the drug to be used in her lethal injection was "cloudy."*

*During the last two execution dates, people of faith rallied around Kelly to ask that her life be spared. We believe this attention helped save Kelly's life, as so many were focused on her story of transformation, redemption, and forgiveness, and her service to other inmates. Kelly's story gained national attention as the hashtag **#KellyOnMyMind** trended and became a space for lifting up prayers and pleas for Kelly's life. In preparation for another execution date, we are asking concerned individuals to write letters to Georgia's Board of Pardons and Paroles and Governor Nathan Deal to ask for mercy for Kelly. We are joining Kelly's and Doug's children in asking that Kelly's sentence be commuted to life without the possibility of parole.*

*The Board of Pardons and Paroles has full power and authority to stop this execution, and can decide at any time to rehear her case and reverse their decision. As the highest elected official in Georgia, Governor Deal is also not powerless in this case. Community support for Kelly could be a significant factor in commuting her sentence, and for this reason we believe that every letter will make a difference.*

### **Meeting Kelly...**

- Kelly Gissendaner has accepted full responsibility and expressed deep remorse for her involvement in the murder of her husband, Douglas Gissendaner: "it is impossible to put into words the overwhelming sorrow and remorse I feel ... there is just no way to capture the depth of my sorrow and regret. I would change everything if I could."
- Over the course of her 18-year period of incarceration, Kelly Gissendaner has experienced a profound spiritual transformation, maturing as a person and in her faith. She has completed a certificate in Theology and has participated in multiple programs offered in the prison. The outgrowth of this journey is seen vividly in the care and support she has offered to fellow inmates who were placed in lockdown near her cell, often because of their behavioral problems or mental illness. Many of these women have come forward to share their experiences of how Kelly was their only strength and support during their darkest days in prison. Some who had attempted or were contemplating suicide credit Kelly with saving their lives. All say that Kelly challenged them to change their lives while they were in prison, offering encouragement, guidance, and love when they needed it most.
- Kelly has witnessed to literally hundreds of young people in prison prevention programs, offering meaningful and direct advice about getting their lives back on track.
- Kelly is respected by Department of Corrections staff. She is seen as an example to other inmates and viewed as an asset to the institution. Former warden Vanessa O'Donnell said of Kelly, "she can provide hope to the most desperate female offender in a manner no one else could possibly understand."
- One prison official who worked with Kelly talked about her being a spiritual mentor to other women and said that she has led more than 50 people to Christ during the time she has been incarcerated.
- Kelly has taken advantage of every possible opportunity to change her life. She is an inspiring example of how educational and rehabilitation programs for women in prisons are meant to work.
- The three children of Kelly and Doug Gissendaner have reconciled with their mother despite her role in their father's murder. They say that their dad was a kind and gentle man who would never

want Kelly to be executed. They believe that forgiving their mother is the best way to honor their beloved father's memory.

### **Details of the case:**

- Kelly did not physically commit the murder and was not present when Doug Gissendaner was killed.
- The individual who actually committed the murder, Gregory Owen, is serving a life sentence and could be eligible for parole in 7 years. He admitted in post-conviction proceedings that he lied at trial about three key facts to make her look worse in the eyes of the jury:
  - Ms. Gissendaner did not provide the murder weapon, the knife.
  - Ms. Gissendaner did not walk up into the woods some 300-500 feet to view her husband's body to ensure that he was dead.
  - Unbeknownst to Ms. Gissendaner, Owen recruited another person to help him kill Mr. Gissendaner. Owen has never disclosed the identity of this person.
- If the state proceeds to execute Ms. Gissendaner, it will be the first time in the modern death penalty era (post-1976) that Georgia has executed an individual who did not kill the victim and was not there when the victim was killed.
- The prosecution felt that a life sentence was appropriate in this case and they originally extended a life offer to Ms. Gissendaner.
- This crime happened in Gwinnett County and for this reason, letters of support from individuals living and working in Gwinnett County are important for Kelly's case.
- We still do not have clear answers about what went wrong with the lethal injection chemicals on March 2 that caused the state to cancel Kelly's execution. Kelly's lawyers sought information to uncover what happened but their requests were denied. She deserves a full hearing into this matter, including access to information and the opportunity for experts to evaluate what went wrong and why.

### **Links and articles**

For more about Kelly's case, visit [www.kellyonmymind.com](http://www.kellyonmymind.com)

### **INSTRUCTIONS for Letters**

Please send letters to the following addresses, as well as to the email address for each office. Please also send a separate email with your letters to the following email address ([letters@kellyonmymind.com](mailto:letters@kellyonmymind.com)) so they can be included in Kelly's official clemency petition. Finally, please let us know if we have permission to publish your letter online.

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