

# CESCM

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March 14, 2004

The Honorable Greg Abbott, Attorney General  
Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 12548  
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Attorney General:

The Council for Ecumenical Christian Ministry (CESCM) is the affiliate member of the World Student Christian Federation in the United States. The administrative body of CESCM consists of representatives from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), The United Methodist Church and, United Church of Christ. We, CESCM, are writing to urge you not to oppose a new trial for Nanon Williams. Mr. Williams, who was 17 years old at the time of the crime, was sentenced to death for the 1992 murder of Adonius Collier. His case is currently in the federal courts.

We are extremely concerned about several aspects of this case. To begin, there are serious doubts about Mr. Williams' guilt. False ballistic evidence presented by the state went unchallenged by his unprepared defense lawyer. Moreover, Mr. Williams' lawyer failed to present expert evidence that Mr. Williams suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of his violent upbringing. The jury only received limited details of this abusive past and its impact on him. Two of the original trial jurors have suggested that the outcome of the case would have been different if the jury had been provided with the evidence as it is now known. After hearing this post-conviction evidence, a state judge decided that Mr. Williams should receive a new trial because he had been denied his right to effective assistance of counsel.

In addition to these concerns, we are greatly disturbed by the fact that Mr. Williams was sentenced to death for a crime that occurred when he was 17 years old. According to international law (Michael Domingues v. United States, Case 12.285, Merits, Report No. 62/02, 22 October 2002), the use of the death penalty on a person who was under the age of 18 at the time of the crime is prohibited. Because this law is binding everywhere, including the state of Texas, we are concerned that the state is pursuing the death penalty for Mr. Williams. The international reputation of Texas and that of the United States is at stake in this case.

While we have tremendous sympathy for the family and friends of Adonius Collier, we believe that the death penalty should not be an option for Mr. Williams for the above reasons.

Attorney General Abbott, we strongly urge you to confess error and not oppose a new trial for Nanon Williams. Thank you for your time and attention to this very serious matter.

In Christ's Peace,

The Council for Ecumenical Student  
Christian Ministry (undersigned)