

Bios for MVFHR Board of Directors

Renny Cushing

Renny Cushing is the founder and Executive Director of Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights. His father's murder in 1988 has shaped his work as an advocate for crime victims and as an opponent of capital punishment. As a victim-abolitionist Renny has been a pioneer in the effort to bridge death penalty abolition groups and the victims' rights movement. He travels throughout the U.S. and the world speaking with and on behalf of victims who oppose capital punishment.

He has testified before the U.S. Congress and several state legislatures on victims' issues and the death penalty, articulating policies that promote violence prevention, meet the needs of crime victims, and end state killings. He has written and lectured extensively and is the co-author of *Dignity Denied: The Experience of Murder Victims' Family Members Who Oppose the Death Penalty*, and *I Don't Want Another Kid to Die*, a collection of homicide family members' voices against the juvenile death penalty. He also appears, along with many other MVFHR founding members, in *Not In Our Name*, a collection of profiles of murder victims' families who oppose executions.

A lifelong social justice activist, Renny has been a Justice of the Peace for the past 25 years. He served two terms in the New Hampshire House of Representatives, where he was involved in victims' issues and sponsored a measure that would have abolished the death penalty in that state. Renny wrote the Whistleblower's Protection Act, a groundbreaking law providing assistance to victims of domestic violence. He also supported the passage of laws establishing a victims' bill of rights, victims' advocate programs, and a victims' compensation fund. In 2001, as plaintiff in *Cushing v. McLaughlin*, he was successful in a landmark state court case brought to enforce New Hampshire's Victims Bill of Rights law.

He has counseled victims' families and supported them during trials, hearings and executions. He also helps the families of the condemned learn to survive their particular traumas. His work with lawyers, corrections and law enforcement personnel, and prison inmates helps them understand the victim experience and become more sensitive to victims' needs. He is a trained facilitator for dialog between offenders and victims, and is part of a prison-based Victim-Offender Dialog Program.

He serves on the board of directors of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, where he is vice-chair, the board of the American Society of Victimology, and the steering committee of the World Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. He is a member of National Organization for Victim Assistance, the U.S. Human Rights Network, Amnesty International, Fight Crime Invest In Kids, Parents of Murdered Children, and the National Writers Union/UAW Local 1981.