

BILL PELKE, Alaska
Grandson of Ruth Pelke, Murdered in
Indiana in 1985

Bill Pelke's grandmother, Ruth Pelke, was murdered by four teenage girls who came to her home. One of the girls, Paula Cooper, was sentenced to death for the crime, and at 16 became the youngest female on death row in America. Originally supportive of her death sentence, Bill Pelke ultimately became a leader in the campaign to overturn that sentence. Cooper is now serving a sentence of 60 years in prison.

Bill Pelke is president and co-founder of "The Journey of Hope...from Violence to Healing," an organization that conducts speaking tours against the death penalty. He is Board Chair of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and a board member of Alaskans Against the Death Penalty. He has spoken against the death penalty across the U.S. and in 10 countries

"As long as the death penalty was an option, I felt that if they *didn't* give it to Paula Cooper, they were telling my family that my grandmother wasn't as important as a victim whose murderer did get the death penalty. I think that families want the maximum penalty allowed by law for the person who killed their loved one, and most are satisfied if that is life without parole or at least long prison sentence. The way I see it now, the death penalty has absolutely nothing to do with the healing that murder victims' family members need after a loved one has been killed; in fact, it just continues the cycle of violence and creates more victims."

Links to more information:

www.journeyofhope.org
<http://rittenhousecanada.org/info/pelketransformativejustice.html>
<http://www.adn.com/life/story/4649129p-4605441c.html>



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