

California Executes Crips Gang Co-Founder

continued **▲** from Front

Lora Owens, stepmother of one of the four people Williams was convicted of killing witnessed the execution. "I believe it was a just punishment long overdue," she told ABC's "Good Morning America."

Williams' case became one of the nation's biggest death-row cause celebres in decades, with Hollywood stars and capital punishment foes arguing that Williams' sentence should be commuted to life in prison because he had made amends by writing children's books about the dangers of gangs and violence.

His execution also drew fierce criticism in Europe, where politicians in Schwarzenegger's native Austria called for his name to be removed from a sports stadium in his hometown.

"Schwarzenegger has a lot of muscles, but apparently not much heart," said Julien Dray, spokesman for the Socialist Party in France, where the death penalty was abolished in 1981.

Williams became the 12th person executed in California since lawmakers reinstated the death penalty in 1977.

In the days leading up to the execution, state and federal courts refused to reopen his case. Monday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger denied Williams' request for clemency, suggesting that his supposed change of heart was not genuine because he had not shown any real

remorse for the killings committed by the Crips.

"Is Williams' redemption complete and sincere, or is it just a hollow promise?" Schwarzenegger wrote. "Without an apology and atonement for these senseless and brutal killings, there can be no redemption."

Schwarzenegger said the evidence of Williams' guilt was "strong and compelling." Witnesses at Williams' trial said he boasted about the killings, saying: "You should have heard the way he sounded when I shot him."

Williams was condemned in 1981 for gunning down convenience store clerk Albert Owens, 26, at a 7-Eleven in Whittier and killing Yen-I Yang, 76, Tsai-Shai Chen Yang, 63, and the couple's daughter Yu-Chin Yang Lin, 43, at the Los Angeles motel they owned. Williams claimed he was innocent.

Williams was led into the death chamber at midnight, shackled and handcuffed. He declined to give a formal final statement.

He seemed frustrated by the length of time it took officials to insert the intravenous lines in his arms. He repeatedly looked up, shaking his head at supporters, reporters and other witnesses whom officials did not identify.

In all, it took nearly a half-hour to prepare Williams for execution. It took much less time to die; he appeared to stop breathing just moments after a prison official read the death warrant and said, "The ex-



Anti-death penalty protesters raise their arms in support of Stanley Tookie Williams outside of San Quentin State prison early Tuesday. The convicted killer and Crips gang co-founder's case stirred a national debate about capital punishment and the possibility of redemption. (AP photo)

ecution shall now proceed."

Williams was described as "compliant, quiet and thoughtful," by Corrections Department spokeswoman Terry Thornton in the hours before the execution. He declined to have a last meal as he waited in the holding cell, drinking milk instead. Prison officials said he spent his last hours reading mail, watching television and visiting with his lawyers and friends.

After watching her longtime friend die, Barbara Becnel told the crowd of hundreds gathered outside prison gates that she would prove Williams' innocence and that

Schwarzenegger was a "cold-blooded murderer."

She said Williams "was brave and strong and he was everything we believed him to be."

Singer Joan Baez, MASH actor Mike Farrell and the Rev. Jesse Jackson were among the celebrities who protested the execution.

"Tonight is planned, efficient, calculated, antiseptic, cold-blooded murder and I think everyone who is here is here to try to enlist the morality and soul of this country," said Baez, who sang "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" on a small plywood stage set up just

outside the gates.

A contingent of 40 people who had walked the approximately 25 miles from San Francisco held signs calling for an end to "state-sponsored murder." But others, including Debbie Lynch, 52, of Milpitas, said they wanted to honor the victims.

"If he admitted to it, the governor might have had a reason to spare his life," Lynch said.

Among the celebrities who took up Williams' cause were Jamie Foxx, who played the gang leader in a cable movie about Williams; rapper Snoop Dogg, himself a former Crip; Sister Helen Prejean, the nun de-

scribed in "Dead Man Walking"; and Bianca Jagger. During Williams' 24 years on death row, a Swiss legislator, college professors and others nominated him for the Nobel Prizes in peace and literature.

Williams founded the Crips gang with a friend in 1971 and managed stay out of trouble for years despite his claims that he was a drug-fueled thug who robbed, beat and shot at people.

Authorities say the gang is responsible for hundreds of deaths, many of them in battles with the rival Bloods for turf and control of the drug trade.

Whatever luck Williams found on the streets avoiding the law ended in 1979 after four people were killed in a pair of armed robberies that were connected to him and his pump-action shotgun.

Williams never wavered from his claim of innocence and said he refused to confess to crimes he did not commit, even if doing so would save his life. He said he redeemed himself while in prison and apologized for starting the Crips.

"There is no part of me that existed then that exists now," Williams said recently during several hours of interviews with The Associated Press. He said that while he wanted to live and continue his work with children, he was prepared to die.

"I haven't had a lot of joy in my life. But in here," he says, pointing to his heart, "I'm happy. I am peaceful in here. I am joyful in here."

Hotels for Katrina Victims Extended

(AP) — A government program that put Hurricane Katrina evacuees in hotels while they sought other housing must be extended a month beyond the deadline set by the Federal Emergency Management

Agency, a federal judge ruled Monday.

Judge Stanwood Duval extended the program until Feb. 7.

The temporary restraining order came from a class action lawsuit filed in November by

advocates for hurricane victims. Attorneys pressing the lawsuit said FEMA has failed to provide aid to many who qualify and that information on the aid has been slow to reach those who need it most.

Correction:

Dr. Norwood Knight-Richardson of Oregon

Health Sciences University is the founder of the African American Health Coalition. He was misidentified

in last week's front page story "Call to Action on Health." We regret the error.



David Thomas walks with his nephew Eric Flournoy, as he visits his destroyed home Dec. 1 after returning to it for the first time since Hurricane Katrina hit in the Ninth Ward section of New Orleans. (AP photo)

Hurricane Toll Grows Higher

Evacuation hastened deaths

(AP) — Singer Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown was 81 and already seriously ill when he fled the area ahead of Hurricane Katrina, and associates think the stress of evacuating and the heartbreak of losing his home hastened his death.

Still, the master of blues, country, jazz and Cajun music isn't part of Katrina's official death toll of 1,323 people in Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama and Georgia.

Neither is 13-month-old Destiny McNeese, who rolled onto her stomach and suffocated on an air mattress after her family fled from

Kentwood to Kentucky.

Noris a 56-year-old New Orleans woman who had a stroke two days after she was bused from the famous storm refugee shelter in the Superdome to Texas.

Even as the official toll continues to rise when more bodies are found in once-flooded homes, the real total may never be known.

The victims are scattered far and wide, and the connections of their deaths to the storm are not necessarily obvious.

Officially, as of Sunday, the states counted 1,075 deaths in Louisiana, 230 in Mississippi, 14 in Florida and two each in Georgia and Alabama. But the states have different definitions for storm-related

deaths. For example, Louisiana counts evacuee deaths from heart attacks or strokes before Oct. 1 as storm deaths, but Georgia doesn't.

Of the 19 evacuees who died in Georgia before Oct. 1, one was shot and the others had serious medical problems when they arrived, said Tod Rose of the Georgia Department of Human Resources. He could not reveal causes of deaths but by that state's standard none was a victim of Katrina.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals is getting copies of evacuees' death certificates from other states and reviewing them to see which deaths likely were caused or hastened by the Aug. 29 storm.

Food Stamp Cuts Would Sting

Budget cuts being considered by Congress would hit Oregon's food stamp program disproportionately hard, an analysis by the Oregon Center for Public Policy finds.

Oregonians would suffer at least 14 percent of the food stamp cuts, even though the state makes up


less than 2 percent of the food stamp caseload nationwide.

Congress will be deciding soon whether to eliminate food stamp benefits for about 255,000 low-income Americans.

A House-passed bill would sharply scale back a provision in

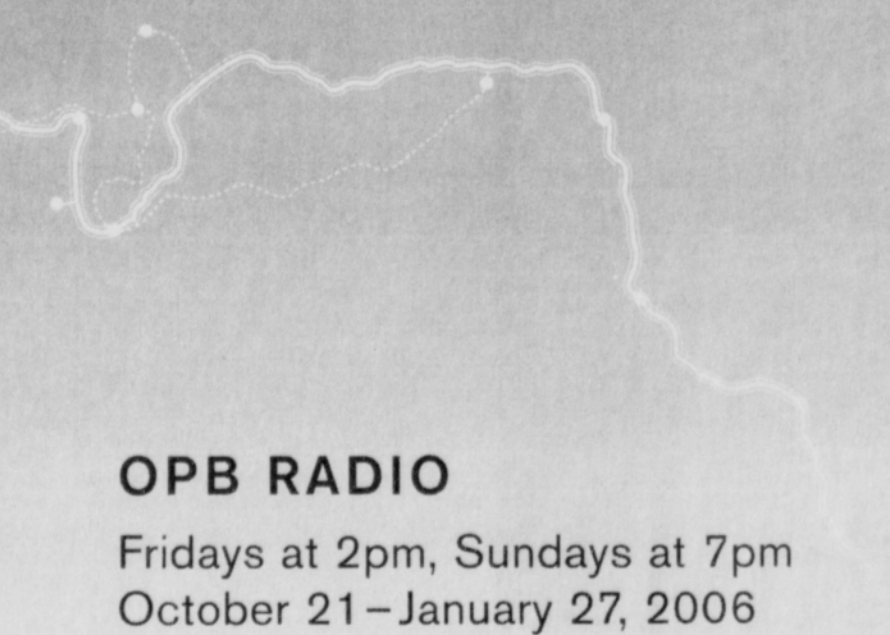
the food stamp rules called "categorical eligibility" to reach more low-income working families and increase from five to seven the number of years legal immigrant families must reside in the United States before becoming eligible for food stamps.

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