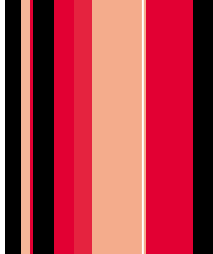




steve ullathorne



andy bradshaw



## GALLOWS HUMOUR COMES TO BLOOMSBURY

On Wednesday 23 May, some of the best known names from the world of comedy are standing up for **REPRIEVE** in an evening of **Gallows Humour** at the Bloomsbury Theatre in London.

The line up (see below) includes stand-up comics Bill Bailey and Mark Thomas, with music from the soon-to-be-legendary punk tribute band Beergut 100.

This unique event is raising funds for **REPRIEVE'S** vital work providing frontline investigation and legal representation for prisoners denied justice and a fair trial. **REPRIEVE** is grateful to everyone for taking part – and to the Bloomsbury Theatre, for its support.

### THE LINE UP

#### Comedy

##### Bill Bailey

Bill Bailey is a comedian, musician and actor best known for live shows Bewilderness and Part Troll, and his work on television in programmes such as Never Mind the Buzzcocks and Black Books.

##### Mark Steel

Mark is a stand-up comic and regular on BBC radio and TV. He writes a column for the Independent newspaper.

##### Mark Thomas

Mark is a well-known comic, activist and human rights campaigner. He has made a series of programmes for Channel 4 using his trademark mix of comedy and investigative journalism.

##### Simon Munnery

Simon performs under various guises – Alan Parker: Urban Warrior, The League Against Tedium and as himself. He's well-known for his stand-up work on the alternative circuit and has appeared both on radio and TV.

##### Robin Ince

Robin won the 2007 Chortle Award for best compere and the Time Out 2006 Outstanding Comedy Achievement Award. He is a regular on radio and TV.

##### Kevin Eldon

Kevin's TV writing credits include Emmy award-winning Smack the Pony, and he has performed in Hot Fuzz, I'm Alan Partridge and Brass Eye.

##### Shappi Khorsandi

Shappi fled her native Iran when her father was sentenced to death for writing a satirical poem. She is a stand-up comedian, now based in London.

#### Music

##### Beergut 100

The line up of this unique punk tribute band, which played at Edinburgh Fringe Festival last year, is made up of highly acclaimed comedians and actors: Bill Bailey, Martin Trenaman, Christian Reilly, Phil Whelans, Kevin Eldon and Jim Miller.

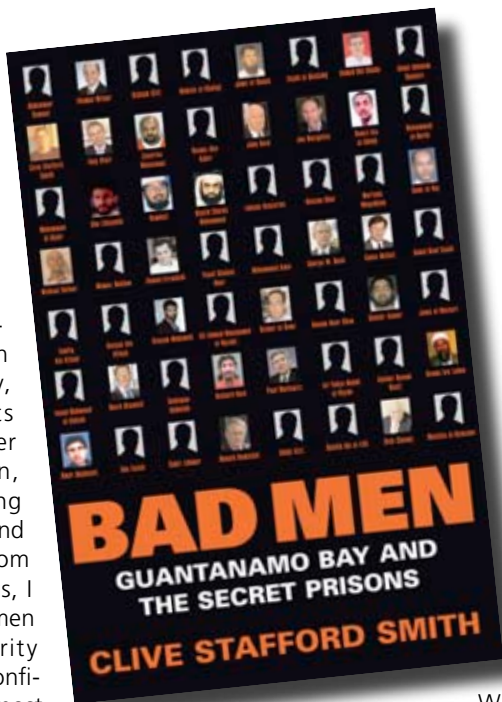
# TALES FROM THE 'LAW-FREE ZONE'

**REPRIEVE** legal director Clive Stafford Smith's new book gives a vivid insight into life at Guantánamo Bay, the military base which was created by president George Bush to be beyond the bounds of law

Security on the 12-seater civilian flight to Guantánamo Bay is relaxed. In Fort Lauderdale, the passengers assemble at the commuter terminal, and the crew steadfastly refuse to search anything. Finally, one of the pilots waves a wand over each of the men, pointedly excluding both the women and all the baggage from the search. Curious, I ask why only the men receive the security check. The pilot confidently replies that most weapons are hidden

around the ankles, and men wear long trousers. I point out that here all five of his female passengers have spurned the skirt. He nods, smiles, and walks away.

I am surprised to find such minimal security on the way to this island prison, reputed to house the most dangerous terrorists on earth. If anyone wants to commandeer a plane to attack Guantánamo, he only has to take a beginner's course in hijacking. But it would not be a task for the weak-bladdered terrorist, as the pilot reminds us that there is no toilet on the plane, casually estimating the flight at somewhere between three and four hours. The co-pilot points out the cooler full of complimentary fizzy drinks that blocks the exit aisle, a temptation to the unwary. Before we arrive, one of the men will sheepishly apologise as he covers his lap, filling an empty bottle.



We fly over blue sea and the occasional sandy archipelago. Most passengers have military haircuts, and snooze once we get underway. I drown out the engine with my headphones, and settle down to work on my laptop. I am heading down for another week at the naval base, as one of the volunteer lawyers representing the Muslim prisoners there. I am always excited to come to Guantánamo, as visiting the clients is my favourite part of the job. It is where theory meets reality, the human cost of President George W Bush's executive order establishing this secret prison full of 'bad men' shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan began in October 2001.

**Bad Men. Guantánamo Bay & the Secret Prisons**, Weldenfeld & Nicholson; £16.99 (hardback); <http://www.orionbooks.co.uk/HB-40429/Bad-Men.htm>

## WHAT IS REPRIEVE?

**REPRIEVE** is a UK charity that fights for prisoners on death row or held without charge or trial in the name of the 'war on terror'. None of these prisoners can afford to pay for representation.

We rely on donations and help from volunteers to carry on our work. See our website [www.reprive.org.uk](http://www.reprive.org.uk) for information on how you can get involved; or send back the dona-

# LUONG'S LAST HOPE

*A brain-damaged Briton on death row in Vietnam faces certain death by firing squad unless his plea for clemency is granted*



A former London car mechanic faces execution by firing squad in Vietnam.

In April, Luong Le Manh, (pictured with his nephew), lost his final appeal against the death sentence imposed in November 2006 for smuggling heroin. Luong, who is British and whose two sons live in south east London, could now be executed at any time, without notice.

Luong's last hope of avoiding execution lies with Vietnamese President Nguyen Minh Triet who has the power to grant Luong clemency. If Luong's clemency plea is rejected, he will be executed by firing squad within a matter of days. No execution date will be set, and his family will not be given notice of what is happening. Luong's family will most likely first learn of Luong's execution when the Vietnamese authorities ask them to collect the remains.

**REPRIEVE** has led the campaign for Luong's sentence to be commuted, which attracted widespread support from the Foreign Secretary, MPs, MEPs, and the Mayor of London. **REPRIEVE** believes that continued representations on Mr Luong's behalf from the highest level of the British government is crucial to the success of Luong's clemency petition.

Luong, 46, was brain-damaged as a child when his village in Vietnam was bombed

by American B52 bombers. He fled to Britain as one of the Vietnamese 'boat people' and arrived in London in 1983, where he became a British citizen. He lived in south east London, working as a mechanic, for 20 years, before returning to Vietnam in 2004.

**REPRIEVE** believes it would be unlawful for the Vietnamese government to execute Luong, as it is against international (and Vietnamese) law to impose the death penalty on anyone 'suffering from any form of mental disorder'.

Luong was convicted of taking part in a heroin smuggling operation. However, his family say his brain injury makes him vulnerable to being manipulated by others and means his judgement is impaired. During his five-day trial, he showed little sign of understanding the seriousness of the proceedings. At one point, he asked the judge: 'What is heroin?'

In a report obtained by **REPRIEVE**, Jon Kennedy, a British psychiatrist wrote that Luong was 'suffering from a mental disorder...which would have directly impacted on his capacity to make good decisions.'

A petition urging Tony Blair to act to save Luong's life has been set up on the Downing Street website: <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/SaveLuong/>

# BITTERSWEET FREEDOM FOR BISHER

*Bisher Al Rawi is back with his family in Surrey but for his best friend, Jamil El Banna, & the other British residents still held at Guantánamo Bay (see box), the long and agonising wait goes on*



So, after four long years, British resident Bisher Al Rawi (pictured above) is finally a free man. Bisher was released from the legal limbo of Guantánamo Bay and flown home to his family and friends in the UK.

'My nightmare is finally at an end,' he said soon after his release. And what a nightmare it has been.

*'The hopelessness you feel in Guantánamo can hardly be described. Allegations are made against you that are laughably untrue, but you have no chance to prove them wrong'*

Bisher, his brother Wahab, best friend, Jamil El Banna (pictured below), and another business associate, were arrested in November 2002 when they arrived in the Gambia on a business trip (they were planning to set up a mobile peanut oil processing plant). The Gambian authorities then handed them over to American agents. Wahab and the other business partner, who were both British citizens, were quickly released and returned to the UK. Bisher and Jamil were flown to the 'Dark Prison' outside Kabul, Afghanistan – where they were held for several weeks in the most medieval conditions – and then on to Guantánamo Bay.

Bisher was kept in isolation for most of his final year at Guantánamo as punishment for refusing any further cooperation with his interrogators. He was held in a cell, six foot by eight

foot, where food and 15 sheets of lavatory paper were pushed through a narrow slot in the door each day. He was deprived of even a toothbrush or soap, and left with simply a half-inch-thick mat to sleep on, a Qur'an, a pair of flip flops, and thin orange prison clothing.

One week, the air conditioning would be shut off, and he would swelter in his tiny cell in the Cuban heat. The next, the air conditioning would be on full blast, and he would spend the week shivering. The lights were left on 24 hours a day, making it difficult to sleep. Apart from the Qur'an, he had nothing to read; nothing to do.

Bisher says: 'The hopelessness you feel in Guantánamo can hardly be described. You are asked the same questions hundreds of times. Allegations are made against you that are laughably untrue, but you have no chance to prove them wrong. There is no trial; no fair legal process.' Bisher was accused of having taken part in terrorist training in Afghanistan but, as he points out, he had never even been to Afghanistan until forcibly taken there by the CIA. The Gambia, where he was picked up, is further away from Kabul than London.

Bisher is desperate for his friend Jamil to be freed and reunited with his five children, the youngest of whom he has never seen.

'I feel great sorrow for the other British residents who remain prisoners in Guantánamo Bay. Some are now on hunger strike protesting against their extended solitary confinement. The extreme isolation they are going through is one of the most profoundly difficult things to endure. I know that only too well.'



# GUANTÁNAMO BAY – AT A GLANCE

Number of current prisoners: 385

Number of trials held in the past 5 years: 0

Number of prisoners who've never seen a lawyer: 175

Number of British residents held: 8

Number of prisoners cleared for release by US military in 2006 but still held: 80

Number of prisoners on hunger strike: 42

Most days on continuous hunger strike by a prisoner as of May 9, 2007: 636 (and counting, since 11 August 11 2005)

## STILL WAITING

*8 British Residents remain as prisoners at Guantánamo Bay.*

- **Shaker Aamer:** 40, from Wandsworth, south London. Married to a British citizen with 4 British children. Held in isolation since 24 September 2005. Has been on hungerstrike for more than 100 days and is being force-fed. 
- **Mohammed Al Qadir:** 30, from London. Little is known about Mohammed. The US military has barred **REPRIEVE** lawyers from seeing him, despite his request for representation.
- **Jamil El Banna:** 44, from Brent, north London. Married with 5 British children, the youngest of whom he has never seen. Jamil was seized in the Gambia with his best friend, Bisher Al Rawi, then rendered by the CIA to Afghanistan and from there on to Guantánamo.
- **Ahmed Belbacha:** 37, a hotel worker from Bournemouth. Ahmed has been cleared for release from Guantánamo by the US Military. He was granted exceptional leave to remain in the UK in 2003, based on his asylum claim from Algeria. 
- **Omar Deghayes:** 37, from Brighton. Omar sought refuge in the UK in 1986 after his father's murder by the Gaddafi regime in Libya. The Spanish authorities mistakenly identified him as the person seen on a videotape brandishing a Kalashnikov. Rather than Omar, it was, in fact, the Chechen rebel Abu Walid, who was killed by the Russians in 2004. 
- **Saiid Farhi:** 46, from London. Little is known about Saiid, as the US military has barred **REPRIEVE** lawyers from seeing him, despite his request for representation.
- **Binyam Mohamed:** 28, from Ladbrooke Grove, west London. Binyam was given leave to remain in the UK after fleeing from Ethiopia as a teenager. He was seized in Pakistan in April 2002, rendered to Morocco by the CIA and tortured for 18 months. He was rendered to Afghanistan and then on to Guantánamo, where he faces a military commission (characterised as a 'Kangaroo Court' by Lord Steyn). 
- **Abdenmour Sameur:** 33, from South Harrow. Abdenmour was given refugee status in the UK in 2000, due to well-founded fear of persecution in his home country of Algeria. He worked as a painter and wall-paper hanger.

## SPOTLIGHT ON REPRIEVE FELLOWS

*As part of our regular look at the work of those on the frontline of the fight for the lives of people facing the death penalty, we report on the work of Eleni Antonopoulos*



Eleni Antonopoulos is using her two-year fellowship at the Louisiana Capital Assistance Center to investigate cases that the state will not fund or underfunds in Texas and Louisiana.

Eleni's experiences are demonstrating the significant impact that first-class investigation can have on the outcome of a capital case. Eleni has already saved the life of one capital defendant by proving that his intellectual limitations mean that he should not face the death penalty under the Supreme Court's ruling in *Atkins v Virginia*, and thus persuading the prosecution to abandon its pursuit of death.

She is also working on a project to investigate New Orleans capital murder cases as they occur, as part of an early intervention strategy called the Preliminary Hearing Project. Eleni reports back on one particular case:

"The defendant, 'James' [not his real name] was facing a potential capital indictment. His criminal history, while lengthy, was comprised entirely of crack cocaine-related charges. Completely absent was any evidence of violence. The state was alleging that James and another person shot a man while trying to steal his bicycle in New Orleans' Central City neighborhood. At no stage was James accused of being the gunman, yet the State was still planning to seek death.

"Central City, notorious for violent crime, is considered a tough place to investigate, where most people, it is said, are distrustful of police and nosy

strangers. I conducted a neighborhood canvass and was surprised that almost everybody I approached knew my client and was adamant that the police had arrested the wrong person. Everybody wanted to speak up for James. A picture of his life quickly emerged. James was a hapless, friendly, drug addicted man. James was only in his late twenties but his drug ravaged body looked decades older. He was described to me as the 'neighborhood clown', the guy on the corner who spoke to everybody and made them all smile. Witnesses told me that the police officers who arrested James admitted to them that they did not believe James was involved in the murder. I discovered two alibi witnesses who were willing to testify on his behalf.

*I discovered two alibi witnesses who were willing to testify on his behalf.*

"It was revealed at his preliminary hearing that the State's case centered around one eyewitness who identified James as being the person with the shooter from inside his house very late at night on a dimly lit street. There was no other evidence against James and the State was forced to dismiss all charges against him after two months of wrongful incarceration.

"When I am in the neighborhood I sometimes drive past James' corner to see how he is doing. I am happy to report that James is still there, still making people in this poor, crime ridden community smile."

Without a **REPRIEVE** Fellowship, Eleni would not have been there to help James, and he could have spent years in jail awaiting trial and even been convicted.

**Please consider helping Reprieve raise the funds to support Fellows like Eleni fight on the frontlines for the lives of people facing the death penalty in 2008. There is a form for donations on page 8.**

# REPRIEVE EVENTS

*A key part of REPRIEVE's work is its outreach programme, which includes a range of entertaining and inspirational events. These events highlight our important work and raise funds to continue the fight for justice*

## REVIEW: 'This is a True Story'

When Tom Wright first starting performing 'This is a True Story' in 2001, he never imagined that, six years later, he'd still be telling the story of death-row prisoner Howard Neal. Back when the monologue was created, Tom recalls: 'Everyone expected Howard's death sentence would be overturned soon.'

Six years on, however, the piece has lost none of its urgency: after 25 years on death row in Mississippi, Howard's death sentence is no closer to being commuted.

'This is a True Story' was written by Tom Wright and barrister Nicholas Harrington, founding president of **REPRIEVE** Australia. It is based on Howard's own account of his life, from unremittingly harsh beginnings to his lonely cell on death row. It lays bare the way the US criminal justice system fails the poorest and most vulnerable. Like so many others, Howard's fate was all but sealed once he was arrested for a capital offence and did not have the money to pay for a decent defence in court.

Howard has an IQ of 54 – which gives him the mind of an eight-year-old child. He never learned to read or write. In 1982, he was convicted of a triple murder. The only evidence against him was a confession made to police after he was interrogated without counsel.

'This is a True Story' opens in silence and darkness. On a bare stage, lit only by a single spot, Tom Wright gives an impeccable and brave performance as Howard Neal.

Howard's is a story that was never likely to have a happy ending. He was born into a dirt poor family. Life was brutal. He 'didn't know about Christmas or TV or radio'; his father used to beat his mother with a stick ('We just watched him beat Mama up') and once killed his dog in front of him. 'I didn't have no one to love me or teach me. I realise now I missed out on a big part of my life,' says Howard.

When Howard was 8, his family was largely broken up, with many of his siblings being

adopted. Howard spent the next 10 years in an institution for 'mentally retarded kids'. ('My Mama threw me away'). This was followed by a couple of spells in prison. On release, he married and had a child – but he has no idea where his daughter is now, or if she even knows about him.

In 1981, Howard's life took its current turn. When Howard was arrested for murder, his lawyer quickly asked: 'Do you have any money, or any land, or a car?'

Howard didn't. 'My lawyer said: "There's not much I can do. You're going to be killed by the state."' The lawyer went on to give Howard five years to live, before the inevitable death sentence would be carried out.

Howard has survived five times longer than his lawyer predicted, despite the best efforts of the state of Mississippi to have him killed. He remains on death row, despite the 2003 ruling by the US Supreme Court that executing a mentally retarded person violated the constitution.

As the Howard character speculates in the closing words of the play: 'I don't know whether the state is going to kill me. I know a story like this is hard to believe but this is the story of my life.'

**Fiona Bawdon**

**LENT FESTIVAL:** 'This is a True Story' was performed as part of **REPRIEVE's** Miserere Festival for Lent. The eight-week festival culminated in a unique performance of Handel's Messiah at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, where the St Bride's choir was joined by baroque ensemble, the Saraband Consort.

**AWARD FOR LORILEI:** 'Lorilei: A meditation on loss', won a Sony Gold award for drama. The play, which is a dramatisation of the true story of a mother's meeting with the death row prisoner who killed her son, was first staged by **REPRIEVE** in London and at the Edinburgh Festival before being broadcast on Radio Four.

# STAND UP FOR LIFE AND LIBERTY WITH A STANDING ORDER!

**REPRIEVE** fights for prisoners on death row or held without trial in the name of the "war on terror". Please support our work by setting up a regular donation. All you have to do is fill in the form below and send it to: Annabel Harris, **REPRIEVE**, PO Box 52742, London EC4P 4WS

Name: Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss/

---

Address:

Postcode:

---

- We would like to send you our newsletter and updates on our projects, campaigning and fundraising. If you don't want to receive this information by mail, please tick this box.
- We may occasionally send our members information about organisations who have similar aims. If you do not want to receive this information, please tick this box.
- 

Telephone:

---

Where did you hear of **REPRIEVE**? *word of mouth / event / media / web / other:*

---

---

- We might occasionally phone you to tell you about our projects, campaigning and fundraising. If you would prefer not to be contacted this way, please tick this box.
- 

If you would like email updates on our projects, campaigning and fundraising, please give us your email address. You can cancel these updates at any time.

Email:

---

Please pay **REPRIEVE** *£5 per month / £10 per month / £50 per month /*

*£\_\_\_\_\_ per month / a one-off payment of £\_\_\_\_\_ (please delete as appropriate),*

starting on: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / 20\_\_\_ and debit my account no: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed:

Date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / 20\_\_\_

---

Bank's name:

Sort code:

Address:

Postcode:

---

Pay to: **REPRIEVE**, Co-operative Bank, PO Box 250, Delf House, Southway, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT Account number: 65071605 Sort code 08-92-99

---

**UK taxpayers only:** Gift Aid – you give £1, we get an extra 28p from the tax man.

- I would like **REPRIEVE** to reclaim the tax I pay and have paid on all my donations made since 6 April 2000 and any further donations I may make. I pay, and have paid, income tax or capital gains tax in the UK equal to the tax that **REPRIEVE** will reclaim. UK Registered charity no. 1114900
- 

Do not send this form to your own bank. Please send to:

**REPRIEVE, PO Box 52742, London EC4P 4WS**

**Our patrons,** Alan Bennett, Sir John Mortimer, Jon Snow, Marina Warner and Charles Wheeler **thank you for your support**

**REPRIEVE PO Box 52742 London EC4P 4WS**

**020 7353 4640**

**info@reprieve.org.uk**

**www.reprieve.org.uk**