

VISIBILITY IN THE MEDIA (from BPF Prison Project)

Being visible to the public and to the media is a sure way to get people to take note of your actions. The more visible you are, the more people will pay attention to your cause, and in turn, the more support you will gather.

ATTRACTING THE PUBLIC

- Get the word out about your vigil. Tell your friends, family, and community where, when, and why you are holding your demonstration. Post flyers around your neighborhood advertising the event. Email your e-lists. Post events on your web site if you have one. And word of mouth is a powerful way to generate a buzz.
- Make your presence known so that newcomers to the vigil won't miss you. If you can, set up a table with information about your group. Display banners, signs and hand out flyers so that passers-by will know who you are and what you are doing.

ATTRACTING THE MEDIA

- Write a press advisory and send it to your local newspapers about one week before it should be printed. (See the following page for a sample press advisory.) Follow up with a phone call to see if a reporter is going to cover your story. This also helps to develop a relationship with the reporter, which may help you to get better coverage in the future.
- Write a press release and fax it to your local newspapers the day of the event be printed. (See the following page for a sample press advisory.) Follow up with a phone call to see if a reporter is going to cover your story. This also helps to develop a relationship with the reporter, which may help you to get better coverage in the future.
- Contact your local television and radio stations and notify them of what you are doing. If you want television coverage, try to hold your demonstration during the news hour in the late morning or evening. TV news programs love live coverage. Since we can never determine the time of executions, and we want to have our presence there when it happens, this may not apply to this type of event.
- When working with the media, focus on one simple message. Even though you may have several points that you'd like to get across, it's next to impossible to do this through a demonstration or vigil. In terms of the media, think of your demonstration/vigil as a billboard: you have only a short amount of time for people to see what you're doing, so you want to get your point across quickly and powerfully. Clearly define what your vigil is for (i.e. the unjust nature of the death penalty), and leave it at that. If you use a short, simple sentence to get your point across, your message is more likely to stick with people.
- Having a clearly visible presence and strong unusual striking visuals also helps if you are trying to attract the media. Newspaper stories with a picture always attract the eye of the reader. TV cameras also tend to be biased towards events that provide strong visuals.