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*Sharks, Elephants, Abandoned Puppies,  
and a Tiger of a Total Man:  
Stanley 'Tookie' Williams  
by Terry Lynn Howcott  
Guest Commentator*

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I vehemently oppose the killing machine that is called "the death penalty." It is part and parcel of a more than 200-year historic national desire to perpetrate the killing of Black people – and Black men in particular. I can only hope and pray that Governor Schwarzenegger will extend his thinking about Stanley "Tookie" Williams' case beyond his political "habitat."

As we know, Stanley "Tookie" Williams was just 17 years old when he co-founded the notorious gang "Crips" in 1971. After an early life of crime, he was convicted in a strangely administered 1981 court case for killing four people in a robbery. After his conviction, for a time he furthered his gangster behaviors behind bars. His having been reprimanded to solitary confinement guided him through a spiritual awakening that gave birth to Stanley "Tookie" Williams – the total man. With that, I would say not only the Governor, but all who deliberate his case should focus first on the facts from that 1981 courtroom drama – and then upon the magic Mr. Williams made beyond his strange and questionable conviction.

**THE CASE:** Apparently, circumstantial evidence along with several witnesses who were facing a mound of felony charges (including fraud, rape, murder and mutilation) were the crux of the prosecution's case against "Tookie" Williams. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals stated in a September, 2002 ruling that witnesses in Mr. Williams case had soiled backgrounds and "incentives to lie, in order to obtain leniency from the state in either charging or sentencing."

Unidentifiable fingerprints at the scene were never attributed to Stanley "Tookie" Williams. A bloody boot-print near the victims was never identified. A shotgun shell found at that crime-scene was in fact from a gun purchased by Tookie Williams. But, police found the gun under the bed of a husband and wife who were themselves facing felony insurance fraud charges, and were under investigation for murdering their crime partner.

A primary witness at Williams' trial, who served in a prison cell next to "Tookie" Williams' cell, testified he

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confessed to him in prison. But 20 years after Mr. Williams conviction, it was revealed that a Los Angeles police officer left a copy of the Williams primary police file in that felon's cell for "overnight study." In exchange for his testimony he was given a lesser sentence of his own. Surviving family members of the victims in the case have opposed his clemency request, insisting Mr. Williams never apologized for the killing of their loved ones. But, the facts suggest a strong possibility Mr. Williams is as stone-cold not-guilty as he says he is – and would have nothing for which to apologize – outside of his general life of crime for which he has paid dearly and given much.

**THE TOTAL MAN:** Clear about his charge, and accepting his White-man-ufactured fate, Mr. Williams launched an impassioned intellectual crusade to save as many inner-city youth as he could from crime, gangs, drugs and other self-destructive behaviors. He metamorphosized to author nine children's books about optioning out of gang mentalities. A Williams book "Life in Prison" was awarded two national honors, including one from the American Library Association. His writings have been used and reused in schools, libraries, correctional facilities and in criminal "justice" systems the world over. He has been the face and voice of anti-gang public service announcements aired across the country – and in 2001 he was nominated for a Nobel Prize.

A group of Nobel Laureates and actors, from Bishop Desmond Tutu, to Danny Glover, Anjelica Huston, Noah Wyle, and former New York governor Mario Cuomo have called upon Governor Schwarzenegger to "affirm the human capacity for personal transformation and reinforce the meaning of hope for young people everywhere." Actor, singer extraordinaire Jamie Fox, rapper man Snoop Dogg and others with skill and utter passion have advocated for clemency for Mr. Williams.

So here we have a gentleman, Stanley "Tookie" Williams who may have been prosecuted by a demon, fingered by people who had compelling reasons to lie, and convicted with evidence that either showed the unlikelihood of his involvement or pointed to the involvement of others. Yet, he has summoned from within a way to both create and inspire the young and the old on an international scale. I would just think in particularly pious conservative circles, Mr. Tookie Williams would present the perfect picture of their dictation of the world – the transformation of our lives in order to live like their interpretation of Jesus.

Their support of Mr. Williams would require them to accommodate real world information and incredibly well deserved second chances. Note, Stanley "Tookie" Williams' 1981 prosecutor manipulated and removed every Black person on his jury, leaving him with an all-White jury to deliberate his case. Then, in a last ditch effort to send race-coded messaging to these all White jurors, he compared Mr. Williams to a "Bengal tiger in the San Diego zoo," saying South Central Los Angeles, a predominantly Black community, was equivalent to the natural "habitat" in which Mr. Williams would "behave like a Bengal tiger."

With that, typically unyielding conservatives and others would also have to reassign their compassions for extinct man-eating sharks, tusk-rich elephants, dying off frogs and abandoned puppies everywhere to save the life of a Nobel Prize-nominated tiger of a peacemaker, author, humanitarian and total man, Stanley "Tookie" Williams.

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