

URGENT ACTION

FIRST OHIO EXECUTION IN 10 MONTHS GOES AHEAD

Robert Van Hook was executed in Ohio on the morning of 18 July. He had been on death row for 33 years for a murder committed in 1985.

Robert Van Hook, then 25 years old, was arrested in Florida on 1 April 1985, and extradited to Ohio to face charges for the capital murder of David Self, also 25, who had been killed in his apartment in Cincinnati on 18 February 1985. Robert Van Hook waived his right to trial by jury, and was tried before a three-judge panel which convicted him of the murder and sentenced him to death in August 1985.

The Ohio parole board held a clemency hearing on 24 May 2018, at which Robert Van Hook's lawyers gave details of his abusive and dysfunctional childhood and its impact on him. A psychiatrist/psychologist testified that he presented a classic case of post-traumatic stress disorder which, with borderline personality disorder, rose to the level of a major mental disability. The board voted against clemency, over the dissent of one of its members who wrote that "despite the heinous nature of the crime", the prisoner's childhood and its effects on him "serve to mitigate the offense". Governor John Kasich rejected clemency on 29 June.

The execution went ahead as scheduled and Robert Van Hook was pronounced dead at 10.44 am on 18 July. In his final statement before being put to death, he said to David Self's brother and sister, "I'm very sorry for taking your brother from you. I'm no good. I hope you now have some peace."

There have been 1,479 executions in the USA since 1976 when the US Supreme Court approved new capital statutes, 56 of them in Ohio. There have been 14 executions in the USA this year. This was the first execution in Ohio since September 2017.

No further action is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update to UA 116/18. Further information <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/8601/2018/en/>

Name: Robert Van Hook

m/f: Male

Further information on UA: 116/18 Index: AMR 51/8812/2018 Issue Date: 18 July 2018.

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