

# California: Victim and Executor

anon.

1967

Aaron Mitchell was an American black man who killed a cop. In retribution the state of California asphyxiated Mitchell with cyanide poison gas fumes in San Quentin prison on April 12.

California's first execution in four years took just 30 seconds after Mitchell's limp body was dragged by guards into the green death chamber and strapped to the same chair in which Caryl Chessman died seven years before. The execution was witnessed by 58 persons, while over 350 members of Californians Against State Execution picketed outside.

The UPI reports "Mitchell nodded to Rev. Samuel Calier, pastor of his mother's church, who accompanied him from his death row cell next to the chamber. Before being strapped to one of two chairs in the chamber, Mitchell wiped a tear from his eye and looked at the witnesses.

"When the pellets unleashed their fumes, Mitchell's head jerked upward. His nostrils flared and his chest heaved for 30 seconds before he slumped forward in the chair."

This was California's 501<sup>st</sup> state execution and there are 63 more victims on death row waiting for the gas chamber. Michigan was the first political unit in the Western Hemisphere to abolish capital punishment, in 1837.

Governor Reagan, always the perfect actor, knows just what his audience wants and now that blood is in the air the mad Californians of smog covered cities and paranoid politics will surely demand more. And Reagan, who is ultimately responsible for the state murders, will surely give them what they want. The blood is getting deep in America.

Perhaps most instructive were Mitchell's last words before that dreadful gas hit his lungs; he shouted at the top of his voice: "I AM JESUS CHRIST..." and he probably was.



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