

# THE FLORIDA DEATH PENALTY: THE CASE AGAINST DEATH

## DESCRIPTION

This one-day, virtual event puts the practice of State executions on trial. Expert witnesses will make the case against this 4000-year-old “ultimate retribution”. “The Case Against Death” will feature nationally recognized advocates and scholars as well as those who have lived through the experience of being innocent but on “death row”. This seminar will address the legal challenges, the equity issues, as well as the social, moral, and financial costs. If you think you know where you stand on the “Death Penalty”, you won’t want to miss this.

## PROGRAM

9:00-9:30 am: ***Opening Remarks***

- **NSU Leadership**
- **Dr. Phyllis Scott**, Director of Barry University's Anti-Racism and Equity Coalition, and Dean of the School of Social Work, Barry University
- **Dr. Laura Finley**, Professor of Sociology & Criminology, Barry University
- **Mark Elliott**, Executive Director, Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

9:30-10:15 am: ***Legal issues Panel***

- **Melissa Minsk Donoho**, Chief Assistant and Managing Attorney for the Florida Regional Conflicts Counsel Office
- **Jonathan Perez**, NSU Law Student and Articles Editor for Nova Law Review
- **Linda Harris**, NSU Law Alumnus and former Treasurer of NSU BLSA
- **Brian Stull**, Staff Attorney, ACLU Capital Punishment Project

10:30-11:30 am: ***Exonerees/Innocence Panel***

- **Herman Lindsey**, Florida Exoneree, speaker for Witness to Innocence and host of "Cruel Justice."
- **Clemente Aguirre**, Florida Exoneree

11:30 am-12:30pm: ***Keynote Speaker:***

**Sister Helen Prejean**, Founder of the Ministry Against the Death Penalty

12:30-1:30pm Racial Issues Panel

- **Ngozi Ndulue**, Director of Research and Special Projects, Death Penalty Information Center
- **Kristina Roth**, Senior Advocate for Criminal Justice Programs, Amnesty International USA
- **Dr. Matthew Johnson**, Associate Professor of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

1:30-2:15 pm ***Family/Faith Perspectives***

- **SueZann Bosler**, Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation
- **Christine Henderson**, Senior Manager, EJUSA Trauma & Healing Network (Video)

2:15-3:00 ***Next Steps***

- **Ingrid Delgado**, Board Chair, Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

---

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

---



### **Sister Helen Prejean**

*Founder of the Ministry Against the Death Penalty*

Sister Helen Prejean is known around the world for her tireless work against the death penalty. She has been instrumental in sparking national dialogue on capital punishment and in shaping the Catholic Church's vigorous opposition to all executions.

Born on April 21, 1939, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, she joined the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1957. After studies in the USA and Canada, she spent the following years teaching high school, and serving as the Religious Education Director at St. Frances Cabrini Parish in New Orleans and the Formation Director for her religious community.

In 1982, she moved into the St. Thomas Housing Project in New Orleans in order to live and work with the poor. While there, Sister Helen began corresponding with Patrick Sonnier, who had been sentenced to death for the murder of two teenagers. Two years later, when Patrick Sonnier was put to death in the electric chair, Sister Helen was there to witness his execution. In the following months, she became spiritual advisor to another death row inmate, Robert Lee Willie, who was to meet the same fate as Sonnier.

After witnessing these executions, Sister Helen realized that this lethal ritual would remain unchallenged unless its secrecy was stripped away, and so she sat down and wrote a book, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*. *Dead Man Walking* hit the shelves when national support for the death penalty was over 80% and, in Sister Helen's native Louisiana, closer to 90%. The book ignited a national debate on capital punishment and it inspired an Academy Award winning movie, a play and an opera. Sister Helen also embarked on a speaking tour that continues to this day.

Sister Helen works with people of all faiths and those who follow no established faith, but her voice has had a special resonance with her fellow Catholics. Over the decades, Sister Helen has made personal approaches to two popes, John Paul II and Pope Francis, urging them to establish the Catholic Church's position as unequivocally opposed to capital punishment under any circumstances. After Sister Helen's urging, under John Paul II the catechism was revised to strengthen the church's opposition to executions, although it allowed for a very few exceptions.

Not long after meeting with Sister Helen in August of 2018, Pope Francis announced new language of the Catholic Catechism which declares that the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, with no exceptions.

Today, although capital punishment is still on the books in 30 states in the USA, it has fallen into disuse in most of those states. Prosecutors and juries alike are turning away from death sentences, with the death penalty becoming increasingly a geographical freak. Sister Helen continues her work, dividing her time between educating the public, campaigning against the death penalty, counseling individual death row prisoners, and working with murder victims' family members. Sister Helen's second book, *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*, was published in 2004; and her third book, *River of Fire: My Spiritual Journey*, in 2019.

---

---

# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

---

## **Dr. Phyllis F. Scott, Director of Barry University's Anti-Racism and Equity Coalition, and Dean of the School of Social Work, Barry University**

Phyllis F. Scott, PhD, joined the Barry faculty in 2001, and currently serves as the Dean of the School of Social Work. She earned a BA degree from Florida Atlantic, and an MSW and Ph.D. from Barry University School of Social Work. Professor Scott has many years of professional and administrative experience with county and state government working with children, families, and older adults in the areas of abuse and neglect, mental health, substance abuse, developmental disabilities, primary health, housing, and economic self-sufficiency. Professor Scott's professional interests include child welfare policy, social welfare policy, history, social work ethics, and the management and administration of human service organizations. She is an active member of several health and human service boards and committees and has received several recognition awards and honors for her dedication and work with children and families.

---

## **Dr. Laura Finley, Professor of Sociology & Criminology, Barry University**

Dr. Finley is author, co-author, or editor of more than 30 books as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters. She is also actively involved with a number of human rights and social justice organization, including serving on the Boards of FADP, The Humanity Project, and the Peace and Justice Studies Association.

---

## **Jane E. Cross, Professor of Law and Director of the Caribbean Law Programs, Nova Southeastern University College of Law**

Professor Cross has written several articles and book chapters on Caribbean constitutional, regional and human rights Law. She is the author of numerous articles including A Matter of Discretion: The De Facto Abolition of the Mandatory Death Penalty in Barbados – A Study of the Boyce and Joseph Cases, 46 U. Miami Inter-Am. L. Rev. 39 (2014).

Professor Cross has held many leadership roles, coordinated programs, and presented at conferences for various national, regional, and international organizations such as the American Association of Law Schools, the American and Caribbean Law Initiative, the Legal Writing Institute, the Association of Legal Writing Directors, the Southeast Association of Law Schools, and the Global Legal Skills Conference.

---

## **Mark Elliott, Executive Director, Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty**

Mark Elliott, FADP Executive Director, is a native Floridian from Tampa. In 2004, he left a career in medical technology systems and began work to abolish the death penalty as the State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinator for AIUSA. His first assignment was working to help pass legislation to end the juvenile death penalty. In 2006, he became Executive Director of FADP – Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Since then, FADP has become the statewide grassroots coalition organization that represents the many various and diverse stakeholders in Florida's struggle to abolish the Death Penalty and reform our criminal legal system.

---

---

## **Olympia Duhart, Associate Dean for Faculty Development, and Professor of Law.**

Olympia Duhart studies teaching, learning, and vulnerable populations. As a full-time faculty member at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) Shepard Broad College of Law, Professor Duhart teaches Legal Research and Writing, Constitutional Law, and First Amendment Law. She is a tenured Professor of Law, Associate Dean for Faculty Development, and former Director of the nationally ranked Legal Research & Writing Program at NSU. Professor Duhart also taught a short-course on American Constitutional Law for the Universitat de Barcelona in Summer 2020. She was also a 2021 Visiting Professor in the Lawyering Skills Program at UC Irvine School of Law.

From 2014 to 2016, Professor Duhart served as Co-President of the Society of American Law Teachers, a national organization of progressive law teachers.

Before joining NSU, Professor Duhart worked at Ruden McClosky and volunteered with the Florida Innocence Project. She also taught English and Creative Writing at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. In addition, Professor Duhart has worked as a staff reporter for The Miami Herald. She is a co-author (with Camille Lamar Campbell) of *Persuasive Legal Writing: A Storytelling Approach*. She is also a producer for the "SALT Teaching Social Justice Podcast." Professor Duhart's work has appeared in the *Wake Forest Law Review*, the *Gonzaga Journal of International Law*, the *Journal of Legal Education*, the *Berkeley Journal of African-American Law & Policy*, *Harvard Business Review* and *The New York Times*. She has received numerous awards for her teaching and service. Duhart was born and raised in Miami.

---

## **Melissa Minsk Donoho, Chief Assistant and Managing Attorney for the Florida Regional Conflicts Counsel Office**

Melissa Minsk Donoho graduated from Nova Southeastern University College of Law in 1992 and since 1997 was working post-conviction death penalty cases for Capital Collateral Regional Counsel. In the years following Ms. Donoho has conducted capital post-conviction, trials and appeals in both the state and federal courts. She has presented oral arguments before the Florida Supreme Court and the Federal 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. For the past 9 years, Ms. Donoho has focused primarily on trial cases with her position as Chief Assistant Regional Counsel. While managing the Broward office of the Regional Counsel, Ms. Donoho maintains a current caseload of new death penalty cases and Hurst resentencing cases.

---

## **Jonathan Perez, NSU Law Student and Articles Editor for Nova Law Review**

Jonathan Perez is a 3L at Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad College of Law. He was born and raised in Miami, Florida, and did his undergrad at Florida International University and received his Bachelor's in Business Administration with a double major in marketing and management. He has always had a passion for criminal law and have recently immersed himself in researching the death penalty abolition movement. His article, "Barbaric Retributivism: New Hampshire and Washington Are Two of the Latest States to Abolish the Death Penalty. Here Is Why Florida Should Follow Suit," was recently published by the *Nova Law Review*. While he is new to the death penalty abolition movement, he looks forward to further educating himself on this controversial topic and doing his part to halt its barbaric practice in the State of Florida.

---

---

## **Linda Harris, NSU Law Alumnus and former Treasurer of NSU Black Law Students Association**

Linda Harris is the dispatch supervisor at United Parcel Service (UPS) and supervises over 160 drivers and has been a supervisor at UPS since 2005. Linda received her Associate of Art in History at Broward College, a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, and Master of Public Administration from Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and received her Juris Doctorate from Nova Southeastern University College of Law in May 2021.

She was the Vice-President of the Corporate and Securities Law Association, the treasurer of the Black Law Student Association and the public relations chair of the International Arbitration Society at Nova Southeastern University as well as a member of the National Trial and Federal Bar Associations.

She is also a member of the American Society for Public Administrators and the National Black Prosecutors Association.

Her love for literacy and education led her to volunteer at Dillard High School United Way Reading PALs and she is on the board of directors for Facilitating Learning for Youth (FLY). She has also been a member of the United Way of Broward County – Women United for over 6 years.

Last year Linda won best advocate at the Constance Baker Motley Mock Trial Competition and made it to the semi-finals in the competition.

---

## **Brian Stull, Staff Attorney, ACLU Capital Punishment Project**

Brian Stull is a staff attorney with the ACLU Capital Punishment Project. Before joining the ACLU, Brian worked for close to five years at the Office of the Appellate Defender (OAD) in New York City, where he represented indigent criminal defendants convicted of serious felonies on direct appeal and in post-conviction and federal habeas corpus proceedings. During his time at OAD, Brian argued over thirty-five appeals, including before the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, the New York Court of Appeals, and the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court. Brian was also co-counsel in a murder retrial of a client whose conviction he had successfully challenged in postconviction. See *People v. Gantt*, 13 A.D.3d 204, 786 N.Y.S.2d 492 (1st Dep't 2004).

Brian received a B.A., with high distinction, in 1993, and an M.S.W. in 1995, both from the University of Michigan, where he was awarded the National Association of Social Workers Social Work Student of the Year. As a social worker, Brian worked with chronically mentally ill adults.

Brian graduated cum laude from New York University School of Law in 2000, where he was awarded the Ann Petluck Poses Memorial Prize for outstanding work as a clinical student in the Capital Defender Clinic. He then served as a judicial clerk for federal magistrate judge Steven Pepe in the Eastern District of Michigan Federal District Court.

---

## **Herman Lindsey, Florida Exoneree, speaker for Witness to Innocence and host of "Cruel Justice."**

Herman Lindsey is Florida's 23rd exonerated Death Row survivor. In a unanimous verdict, the Florida Supreme Court ruled in July 2009 that there wasn't enough evidence to find Herman guilty of anything, much less sentence him to death, and that he did not receive a fair trial. Herman was exonerated in 2009 after spending 3 years on Florida's Death Row. He has never been compensated for his ordeal. He currently resides in S. Florida with his wife and children. He works with at-risk youth. Herman is on the Board of Witness to Innocence and speaks across the U.S. and internationally.

---

---

## **Clemente Aguirre, Florida Exoneree**

Clemente Aguirre is Florida's 28th exonerated Death Row survivor. Clemente was a victim of wrongful conviction and sentenced to death on February 28, 2006. False forensic evidence linked him to the murder of a mother and daughter, his neighbors. The evidence was later ruled false, and the fingerprint analyst came under review for falsely identifying Clemente's prints. Charges were dropped as Clemente prepared for a new trial on November 5, 2018, when multiple witnesses testified that the daughter and granddaughter of the victims had confessed to the crime. He was never compensated for his 14-year ordeal. He has begun to volunteer his time on efforts with other death row exonerees in Florida to share his story and fight to end the death penalty so that others do not have to experience the same injustices that he suffered.

---

## **Ngozi Ndulue, Senior Director of Research and Special Projects at Death Penalty Information Center**

Ngozi Ndulue joined DPIC's staff as Director of Research and Special Projects in September 2018. Ms. Ndulue's career as a lawyer has focused on the intersection of racial justice and the criminal legal system. After graduating from Yale Law School, she clerked for Judge Eric L. Clay on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. She litigated on behalf of death-sentenced individuals as an Assistant Federal Public Defender in Phoenix, Arizona and as a staff member of the Ohio Justice and Policy Center (OJPC) in Cincinnati, Ohio. At OJPC, Ngozi also engaged in policy research, coalition building, and advocacy on a variety of state and local criminal justice issues. Before coming to DPIC, Ngozi served as Senior Director of Criminal Justice Programs at the national NAACP, where much of her work centered on providing unit training, strategic direction, and research to support the NAACP's criminal justice.

---

## **Kristina Roth, Senior Advocate for Criminal Justice Programs at Amnesty International USA**

Ms. Roth oversees the organization's work to abolish the death penalty and stop unlawful use of force by police. She serves as AIUSA's expert on these matters and works regularly with grassroots activists, impacted communities, fellow advocates, elected officials and other top stakeholders to put an end to these urgent human rights abuses. Kristina serves as a co-chair of the Justice Roundtable's federal Law Enforcement Reform Working Group and has represented AIUSA before the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Intolerance, at the annual Fast and Vigil to Abolish the Death Penalty and testified as an expert on police use of force before the Maryland Legislature. She has appeared on MSNBC's The Cross Connection and Al Jazeera, and her analysis has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR and other outlets.

---

---

## **Dr. Matthew Johnson, Associate Professor of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

Matthew B. Johnson's general interest involves how psychology informs due process. His scholarship and research have focused on the areas of interrogation and confession, wrongful conviction, mental status defenses, and parental rights termination in family court. He recently developed an instrument to assess 'Interrogations Expectations', an aspect of the Miranda comprehension and waiver process that has been neglected in the research literature. Dr. Johnson's work in this area demonstrates that suspects may understand the Miranda rights but doubt the police will honor the rights during interrogation. During the Spring 2010 semester, Professor Johnson was Visiting Professor at Rutgers University, School of Criminal Justice, where he conducted a graduate seminar on 'Interrogation and Confession'. Professor Johnson's publications and testimony have been cited favorably in New Jersey Supreme Court decisions. He served on the Executive Committee of New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (NJADP.org), the lead organization in the successful campaign that abolished the death penalty in New Jersey in 2007. He also was a member of the American Bar Association, Section on Individual Rights and Responsibilities – Task Force on Mental Disability and the Death Penalty. In 2013 Professor Johnson was elected to the Board of the National Association of Black Psychologists and he authored the organization's Death Penalty Abolition Resolution (2012) and public policy paper on the death penalty (2013). Dr. Johnson was named the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Outstanding Teacher in 2007. Dr. Johnson is involved the teaching and training of psychology students at the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral level.

---

## **SueZann Bosler, member of Murder Victim's Families for Reconciliation**

In 1986, SueZann Bosler watched her father, Reverend Billy Bosler, die in front of her after they were both stabbed by an intruder in his church. In honor of her father and his moral opposition to capital punishment, SueZann spent years fighting against a death penalty sentence for her father's killer. She first met Bill Pelke in 1988 and helped him start Journey of Hope a decade later. Her favorite lyric is "let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me."

---

## **Christine Henderson, Senior Manager, EJUSA Trauma & Healing Network (Video)**

In 2020, Christine became the Senior Manager of EJUSA's Trauma & Healing Network, continuing to support communities and their grassroots leaders in addressing trauma in transformative ways that promote healing and create systemic change. Previously, she elevated local voices to speak out about the chaos in Florida's death penalty system. Prior to EJUSA, Christine worked at the Southern Poverty Law Center and was instrumental in building the case against an abusive juvenile justice facility that ultimately led to its closure. Christine has always been a fierce advocate for social justice change.

---

## **Ingrid Delgado, Board Chair, Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty**

Ingrid Delgado, FADP Board Chair, serves as Associate for Social Concerns & Respect Life at the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops where she represents the Catholic Bishops of Florida on issues of human life, dignity and social justice before the legislative and executive branches of government and community organizations. She works with Florida's diocesan respect life directors through the State Pro-Life Coordinating Committee and staffs the Conference's Prison Ministry Committee

---