

**IN THE EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
DISTRICT COURT OF SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS  
CRIMINAL DEPARTMENT**

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STATE OF KANSAS,	)	
	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	Case No. 2020-CR-879
	)	
v.	)	
	)	
KYLE D. YOUNG,	)	
Defendant.	)	
	)	
	)	

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**EXHIBIT N to**

**DEFENDANT'S MOTION CHALLENGING DEATH QUALIFICATION AND  
CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AS APPLIED IN KANSAS AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL  
UNDER THE STATE AND FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONS**

## Expert Report of Carol Steiker

March 4, 2022

### Expert Qualifications

1. A complete description of my education and experience and a list of my representative publications relating to capital punishment for the last 15+ years is set forth in my C.V., attached as Appendix 1. I am currently the Henry J. Friendly Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. I teach, research, and write in the broad field of criminal justice, with an emphasis on the legal regulation of capital punishment. I teach a course on Capital Punishment in America, and I am the faculty director of Harvard's Capital Punishment Clinic.<sup>1</sup> I am the author or editor of two books on capital punishment: *COMPARATIVE CAPITAL PUNISHMENT* (Edward Elgar 2019) (with Jordan Steiker, ed.), and *COURTING DEATH: THE SUPREME COURT AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2016) (with Jordan Steiker). I am also the author of several book chapters on capital punishment, including *Judicial Abolition of the American Death Penalty under the Eighth Amendment: The Most Likely Path*, in *THE EIGHTH AMENDMENT AND ITS FUTURE IN A NEW AGE OF PUNISHMENT* (Ryan & Berry, eds., Cambridge University Press 2020) (with Jordan Steiker); *Aggravating and Mitigating Evidence in Capital Cases*, in *ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT* (Bohm and Lee, eds. Routledge 2018) (with Jordan Steiker); *The Death Penalty and Deontology*, in *THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF CRIMINAL LAW* (Deigh & Dolinko, eds., Oxford University Press 2011); *The Beginning of the End?*, in *THE ROAD TO ABOLITION?: THE FUTURE OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN THE UNITED STATES* (Ogletree & Sarat, eds., New York University Press 2009) (with Jordan Steiker), and *Furman v. Georgia: Not an End, But a Beginning*, in *DEATH PENALTY STORIES* (Blume & Steiker,

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<sup>1</sup> In my capacity as faculty director of Harvard's Capital Punishment Clinic, I am responsible for Matthew Besman's externship placement with the ACLU Capital Punishment Project, which is assisting in the representation of Mr. McNeal. All of the students in the clinic are placed in externships with capital defense offices around the country. Matt (Harvard Law School class of 2023) has been working on the McNeal case as part of his externship since January 2022 and will continue through the end of the spring semester in April 2022. Matt has not contributed to my report in any way, nor have I edited any of his work for the ACLU. I make this disclosure solely for the purpose of ensuring transparency about my connections to this litigation.

eds., Foundation Press 2009). I have also authored numerous law review articles on the death penalty, as listed in my C.V.

2. I am currently a member of the American Law Institute (ALI), and I produced a report for the ALI that led it to withdraw the death penalty provisions of the Model Penal Code in 2009. I have previously served on the American Bar Association's Death Penalty Due Process Review Project and on the governing board of the Massachusetts Committee for Public Counsel Services, the statewide public defender. I have been a speaker at the Federal Judicial Center, where I have given presentations on capital punishment and constitutional law. I have testified as an expert witness on the constitutionality of the federal death penalty in a federal capital trial, *United States v. Fell*, No. 201-CR-1201 (D. Vt. 2016). I have also testified as an expert witness on capital punishment before state legislatures in Massachusetts and Montana, and I have served as an expert consultant on reforming or abolishing the California death penalty for the California Committee on Revision of the Penal Code. I have consulted on capital cases at all stages of litigation and have served as counsel in two capital appeals, *Smith v. Texas*, 550 U.S. 297 (2007) (counsel of record for the defendant) and *State v. Addison*, 87 A.3d 1 (N.H. 2013) (amicus counsel). I have served as an expert consultant to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. I have given presentations around the world to academics, lawyers, and public officials on the American death penalty and its relationship to the practice of capital punishment in other countries.

### **Summary Of Anticipated Testimony**

I have been asked by counsel for Cornell McNeal to testify regarding the history and application of the death penalty in the United States and in Kansas, and to specifically address my 2008 study for the ALI and developments since the study.

**I. The History and Context of My Report to the ALI and the ALI's Decision to Withdraw the Death Penalty Provisions of the Model Penal Code**

3. In 1962, the ALI promulgated the Model Penal Code (MPC), which provided influential guidance for state criminal law reform, including model death penalty provisions in § 210.6. In 2009, the ALI formally withdrew its model death penalty provisions “in light of the current intractable institutional and structural obstacles to ensuring a minimally adequate system for administering capital punishment.”<sup>2</sup> That decision and the specific language used by the ALI were recommended by a 2008 Report that I prepared for the ALI, along with my brother and fellow law professor and death penalty scholar, Jordan Steiker, at the request of the Director of the ALI at the time, Lance Liebman.<sup>3</sup> The Report and accompanying background materials from the ALI are attached as Appendix 2.

4. The ALI's Model Penal Code project arose from the ALI's general mission as an independent, non-profit, non-partisan, expert organization to “produc[e] scholarly work to clarify, modernize, and otherwise improve the law.”<sup>4</sup> The ALI is perhaps best known for its “Restatement” projects, in which the ALI has sought to address uncertainty in the law through restatements of basic legal subjects that serve as authoritative sources for judges and lawyers.<sup>5</sup> When the ALI turned its hand to a project on American criminal law, however, “it judged existing law too chaotic and irrational to merit ‘restatement.’”<sup>6</sup> Instead, the ALI decided to draft a model penal code that could serve as a template for state legislative reform. The ALI's enormously influential Model Penal Code project—“far and away the most successful attempt to codify American criminal law”<sup>7</sup>—was launched in 1951, and the MPC was finally adopted by the ALI in 1962. While the MPC was under preparation, the Advisory Committee to the MPC Project,

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<sup>2</sup>AM. LAW INST., MODEL PENAL CODE (quoting language adopted by the ALI Council after a vote of the ALI's membership at the 2009 Annual Meeting), <https://www.ali.org/publications/show/model-penal-code/>.

<sup>3</sup> See Steiker & Steiker, *ALI Report*, at 1 (Attached as Appendix 2).

<sup>4</sup>AM. LAW INST., *ALI Overview*, <http://www.ali.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=about.overview>.

<sup>5</sup> See *id.*

<sup>6</sup> Paul H. Robinson & Markus Dirk Dubber, *The American Model Penal Code: A Brief Overview*, 10 NEW CRIM. L. REV. 319, 323 (2007).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 320.

which was headed by Professor Herbert Wechsler of Columbia Law School as Chief Reporter, voted 18-2 to recommend the abolition of capital punishment.<sup>8</sup> But the ALI's Council held the view "that the Institute could not be influential" on the issue of abolition or retention of the death penalty and thus should not take a position either way.<sup>9</sup> The body of the ALI agreed with the Council, and thus the MPC took no position on the issue, but rather promulgated model procedures for administering capital punishment for adoption by states that retained the death penalty.<sup>10</sup>

5. The death penalty procedures promulgated by § 210.6 of the MPC in 1962 differed from then-prevailing capital statutes in several key provisions. First, the MPC allowed the death penalty only for the crime of murder, not for crimes such as kidnapping, treason, and rape (among others) as many state statutes permitted at the time.<sup>11</sup> Second, the MPC categorically exempted juveniles from the death penalty and gave the trial judge discretion to exempt defendants if "the defendant's physical or mental condition calls for leniency."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the MPC precluded a sentence of death in cases in which "the evidence suffices to sustain the verdict [but] does not foreclose all doubt respecting the defendant's guilt."<sup>13</sup> As for which murders should be punished with death, the MPC did not confine capital punishment to "first-degree" murder (generally defined by state statutes as either premeditated and deliberate murder or felony murder); rather, the MPC made eligibility for the death penalty for any murder turn on the finding, in a separate penalty phase, of one of eight "aggravating circumstances" which ranged from the more objective and clear-cut ("The murder was committed by a convict under sentence of imprisonment"<sup>14</sup>) to the more subjective and qualitative ("The murder was especially

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<sup>8</sup> MODEL PENAL CODE (hereinafter MPC) § 210.6, Comment at 111 (1980) (section repealed 2009).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> MPC § 210.6.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at § 210.6(1)(e).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at § 210.6(1)(f).

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at § 210.6(3)(a).

heinous, atrocious or cruel, manifesting exceptional depravity”<sup>15</sup>). The MPC’s innovation was not only the list of aggravating circumstances, but also the requirement of a bifurcated procedure, in which the determination of guilt and the determination of the appropriate penalty were considered in two separate proceedings. The MPC required the finding of at least one aggravating circumstance at the penalty phase for a defendant to be eligible for the death penalty. In addition, the MPC required the consideration of all “mitigating circumstances” and authorized the imposition of the death penalty only when “there are no mitigating circumstances sufficiently substantial to call for leniency.”<sup>16</sup> Mitigation consisted of eight statutorily defined mitigating circumstances (such as “The defendant has no significant history of prior criminal activity”<sup>17</sup> and “The youth of the defendant at the time of the crime”<sup>18</sup>), but the sentencer was also instructed to consider other evidence “including but not limited to the nature and circumstances of the crime [and] the defendant’s character, background, history, mental and physical condition.”<sup>19</sup> The MPC’s structuring of the penalty phase, with its lists of aggravating and mitigating circumstances, was a significant departure from prevailing practice, which gave sentencing juries essentially unfettered discretion in capital trials to impose life or death (and for a much wider range of crimes than simply murder), without any statutory standards or guidance.

6. For a decade after their adoption, the MPC death penalty provisions had virtually no impact on state procedures.<sup>20</sup> But after the Supreme Court constitutionally invalidated prevailing death penalty statutes in 1972 in *Furman v. Georgia*,<sup>21</sup> a large majority of states sought to draft new capital statutes

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<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at § 210.6(3)(h).

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at § 210.6(2).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at § 210.6(4)(a).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at § 210.6(4)(h).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at § 210.6(2).

<sup>20</sup> While “[p]rior to 1972, no American jurisdiction had followed the Model Code in adopting statutory criteria for the discretionary imposition of the death penalty . . . the only discernible effect of the Model Code proposal was introduction of a bifurcated capital trial procedure in six states.” MPC § 210.6, Comment at 167-68 (1980) (citing Comment, *Jury Discretion and Unitary Trial Procedure in Capital Cases*, 26 ARK. L. REV. 33, 39. n. 9 (1972) (listing states)).

<sup>21</sup> 408 U.S. 238 (1972).

that would meet the *Furman* Court's apparent concern with standardless sentencing discretion. Although a significant minority of states sought to address the problem of standardless discretion through the enactment of mandatory capital statutes, a substantial number of states modeled their new statutory endeavors on the MPC.<sup>22</sup> In 1976, the Supreme Court struck down mandatory capital statutes as unconstitutional under the Eighth Amendment,<sup>23</sup> but upheld the "guided discretion" statutes enacted by Georgia, Florida, and Texas.<sup>24</sup> In doing so, the Court made a point of referencing the ALI's efforts to guide capital sentencing discretion through the Model Penal Code and noted the similarity, either textual or functional, of each of the state statutes that it approved to the MPC's death penalty provisions.<sup>25</sup>

7. Two years after the 1976 cases reinstating the death penalty, the Supreme Court invalidated Ohio's capital statute on the ground that its narrowly drawn list of mitigating circumstances unconstitutionally constrained the sentencer's consideration of mitigating evidence that might call for a sentence less than death.<sup>26</sup> In doing so, the Court adopted as a constitutional requirement an approach virtually identical to the MPC provision that capital sentencers must consider "the nature and circumstances of the crime [and] the defendant's character, background, history, mental and physical condition."<sup>27</sup> As the ALI itself recognized, the Court's cases from 1976 to 1978 outlining the constitutional preconditions for a valid capital punishment scheme "confirm what the 1976 plurality several times implied—that Section 210.6 of the Model Code is a model for constitutional adjudication

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<sup>22</sup> See *id.* at 169 ("Each of the 19 new statutes examined when this comment was prepared resembles the Model Code provision and provides for bifurcation and consideration of specified aggravating circumstances.").

<sup>23</sup> *Woodson v. North Carolina*, 428 U.S. 280 (1976); *Roberts v. Louisiana*, 428 U.S. 325 (1976).

<sup>24</sup> *Gregg v. Georgia*, 428 U.S. 153 (1976); *Proffitt v. Florida*, 428 U.S. 242 (1976); *Jurek v. Texas*, 428 U.S. 262 (1976).

<sup>25</sup> See *Gregg*, 428 U.S. at 193 (citing the MPC to reject the claim that standards to guide a capital jury's sentencing deliberations are impossible to formulate; *Proffitt*, 428 U.S. at 247-48 (noting approvingly that the Florida statute in question was patterned after the MPC); *Jurek*, 428 U.S. at 270 (recognizing that Texas's statutory narrowing of the categories of capital murder serves essentially the same purpose as the list of aggravating circumstances expounded by the MPC).

<sup>26</sup> *Lockett v. Ohio*, 438 U.S. 586 (1978).

<sup>27</sup> MPC § 210.6(2).

as well as for state legislation.”<sup>28</sup>

8. Shortly after the new generation of MPC-inspired, guided discretion statutes were approved by the Court in 1976, executions resumed in the United States, after a decade-long hiatus. Over the next quarter century, the national execution rate soared, reaching levels that the country had not seen since the early 1950’s.<sup>29</sup> Many observers, myself among them, lamented that the new generation of capital statutes failed to fulfill their promise of rationalizing the administration of capital punishment and ameliorating the problems that the ALI and the Supreme Court had sought to address.<sup>30</sup> Observers within the ALI were especially concerned about the shortcomings of the new capital statutes in light of the role that the ALI’s reform efforts and institutional prestige had played in the constitutional reinstatement of capital punishment. Thus, when the ALI approved the undertaking of law reform project that would reconsider the provisions of the MPC relating to criminal sentencing in general, internal critics of the administration of capital punishment viewed the new project as an opportunity to reconsider the ALI’s contribution to the new status quo. In particular, law professor Frank Zimring, an Adviser to the new ALI Sentencing Project, called upon the Project to address (and call for the abolition of) capital punishment.<sup>31</sup> When the ALI set aside the question of capital punishment as beyond the scope of the Project, Professor Zimring resigned in protest as an Adviser and later published an article criticizing the ALI’s failure to address capital punishment.<sup>32</sup>

9. Zimring’s call for abolition within the ALI was taken up by members Roger Clark and Ellen

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<sup>28</sup> MPC § 210.6, Comment at 167 (1980).

<sup>29</sup> See Death Penalty Information Center, *Death Penalty Fact Sheet* (tallying executions yearly from 1976-2010), available at <http://deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/FactSheet.pdf>, and *Executions in the U.S. 1608-2002: The Espy File*, available at <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/ESPYyear.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> See generally Carol S. Steiker & Jordan M. Steiker, *Sober Second Thoughts: Reflections on Two Decades of Constitutional Regulation of Capital Punishment*, 109 HARV. L. REV. 355 (1995).

<sup>31</sup> See AM. LAW. INST., REPORT OF THE COUNCIL TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE AMERICAN LAW INSTITUTE ON THE MATTER OF THE DEATH PENALTY, Annex C at 15 (2009), [https://www.ali.org/media/filer\\_public/3f/ae/3fae71f1-0b2b-4591-ae5c-5870ce5975c6/capital\\_punishment\\_web.pdf](https://www.ali.org/media/filer_public/3f/ae/3fae71f1-0b2b-4591-ae5c-5870ce5975c6/capital_punishment_web.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> See *id.*, Annex C at 15, n. 6 (citing Franklin E. Zimring, *The Unexamined Death Penalty: Capital Punishment and Reform of the Model Penal Code*, 105 COLUM. L. REV. 1396 (2005)).



Podgor, also both law professors, who moved at the ALI's annual meeting in 2007 "That the Institute is opposed to capital punishment."<sup>33</sup> The President of the ALI responded by assigning the Institute's Program Committee the task of deciding whether the ALI should study and make recommendations about the death penalty.<sup>34</sup> The President also appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on the Death Penalty to advise the Program Committee, the Council, and the Director "about alternative ways in which the Institute might respond to the concerns underlying the motion."<sup>35</sup> The Director of the ALI, Lance Liebman, engaged me, along with my brother and frequent co-author Jordan Steiker, to write a report in which we would "review the literature, the case law, and reliable data concerning the most important contemporary issues posed by the ultimate question of retention or abolition of the death penalty and, if retained, what limitations should be placed on its use and what procedures should be required before that sentence is imposed. Another way of asking the question is this: Is fair administration of a system of capital punishment possible?"<sup>36</sup> The report that we produced reviewed the history and then-current state of the administration of capital punishment in the United States and recommended that the ALI withdraw § 210.6 with the following statement: "In light of the current intractable institutional and structural obstacles to ensuring a minimally adequate system for administering capital punishment, the Institute calls for the rejection of capital punishment as a penal option."<sup>37</sup>

10. The Council of the ALI, its chief governing board, submitted a report to the body in advance of the ALI's annual meeting of 2009. The Council adopted our recommendation that the Institute withdraw the death penalty provisions of the MPC and not undertake any further project to revise or replace those provisions.<sup>38</sup> Although the Council's report acknowledged "reasons for concern about

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<sup>33</sup> *Id.*, Annex C at 11.

<sup>34</sup> *See id.*

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*, Annex C at 46.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*, Annex B at 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*, Council's Report at 1.

whether death-penalty systems in the United States can be made fair,”<sup>39</sup> it did not endorse the statement that we proposed in the paper and instead recommended that the body take no position to either endorse or oppose the abolition of capital punishment.<sup>40</sup> At the ALI’s 2009 annual meeting, the body voted as the Council had recommended on the withdrawal of the MPC’s death penalty provisions and the decision not to undertake further reform efforts regarding capital punishment, but it also added, after several hours of vigorous discussion, the following statement: “For reasons stated in Part V of the Council’s report to the membership, the Institute withdraws Section 210.6 of the Model Penal Code in light of the current intractable institutional and structural obstacles to ensuring a minimally adequate system for administering capital punishment.”<sup>41</sup>

11. In essence, the body split the baby in half: it adopted the Council’s report and thus rejected an explicit call for the abolition of capital punishment, but it also adopted the language from our report recognizing “current intractable institutional and structural obstacles to ensuring a minimally adequate system for administering capital punishment.” As Adam Liptak, who reported the ALI’s decision for the *New York Times*, translated: “What the Institute was saying is that the capital justice system in the United States is irretrievably broken.”<sup>42</sup> The body’s resolution went back to the Council, which must approve any action of the body before it becomes official policy of the ALI. In October 2009, the Council approved of the body’s vote and statement, and the ALI’s withdrawal of the death penalty provisions, and its statement of reasons for that withdrawal, became official. The withdrawal of the death penalty provisions of the MPC in 2009 constituted the first change that the ALI had made to the MPC since the Code was promulgated in 1962.

## II. Summary of My Report to the ALI

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<sup>39</sup> *Id.*, Council’s Report at 5.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*, Council’s Report at 6.

<sup>41</sup> AM. LAW INST., MODEL PENAL CODE, <https://www.ali.org/publications/show/model-penal-code/>.

<sup>42</sup> Adam Liptak, *Shapers of Death Penalty Give Up on Their Work*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 5. 2010, at A11.

12. Our 2008 report to the ALI was organized to explain and support our recommendation that the ALI withdraw Section 210.6 of the MPC in light of “current intractable institutional and structural obstacles to ensuring a minimally adequate system for administering capital punishment.” In the introductory section of the report, we described the then-current state of the death penalty in the United States as one of new ambivalence toward the practice. Substantial majorities still registered support for capital punishment in public opinion polls, but the use of the death penalty had begun to decline in terms of both executions and new death sentences after the year 2000. Moreover, we observed that the use of the death penalty seemed to be increasingly concentrated in a small number of states. In this introductory section, we also directly addressed the frequently voiced question about why withdrawal of the death penalty as a penal option was advisable when many of the same problems that we documented in the capital justice process also existed in the ordinary criminal justice process. We explained that the death penalty, unlike incarceration, is not an essential part of a functioning criminal justice system; that some of the problems with the death penalty are more pronounced because of special pressures in capital cases; that the death penalty is uniquely irrevocable; and that problems in the administration of capital punishment present special challenges to the legitimacy of the criminal justice system. The rest of our report was organized into eight subparts that examined “the intractable institutional and structural obstacles” to the fair administration of capital punishment in the United States.

13. The first subpart of our report addressed “The Inadequacies of Constitutional Regulation.” Although the Supreme Court has developed a complex Eighth Amendment jurisprudence addressing capital punishment, the Court’s constitutional regulation of the death penalty has failed to adequately address the problems of arbitrariness, discrimination, and error that the Court identified in its foundational cases in the 1970s. By failing to require legislatures to narrow the number and breadth of aggravating factors that make offenders eligible for the death penalty, while at the same time insisting

that the capital sentencing process be unstructured with regard to mitigating factors, the Court's Eighth Amendment jurisprudence has essentially reproduced the same pathology of wide death-eligibility and standardless sentencing discretion that characterized the pre-*Furman* regime. In addition to the overarching ineffectiveness and incoherence of its Eighth Amendment jurisprudence, the Court's specific constitutional doctrines addressing race discrimination, innocence, and standards for capital defense counsel have failed to set standards or provide remedies for these intractable and continuing problems. We concluded this section of our report by noting that numerous justices from the left, right, and center of the Court have criticized and explicitly rejected numerous aspects (and sometimes the entirety) of the Court's Eighth Amendment jurisprudence, reinforcing our characterization of the Court's effort at constitutional regulation as a failure on its own terms.

14. The second subpart of our report addressed "The Politicization of Capital Punishment." We described two types of "politicization" of capital punishment. The practice of capital punishment (like the rest of criminal justice in the United States) is politicized *institutionally*, in that some or all of the most important actors in the administration of capital punishment are elected, with the exception of lay jurors. Capital punishment is also politicized *symbolically*, in that it looms much larger than it should in public discourse because of its power as a focus for fears of violent crime and as political shorthand for support for "law and order" policies generally. On the institutional side, we described the political pressures that are faced by locally elected prosecutors and by state judges, who overwhelmingly stand for some form of election throughout the United States. We surveyed empirical studies that found that electoral cycles in the aggregate affect sentencing in general and capital sentencing in particular. On the symbolic side, we noted pressures faced by elected officials outside of the everyday criminal justice process, such as governors and legislators, due to the intensity of emotions and saturation of media attention that capital cases evoke. The willingness of governors to sign death warrants (or conversely, to grant clemency or impose moratoria) is subject to the high salience of capital punishment as a

political issue. The ability of legislators to shrink or even merely maintain the breadth of capital statutes is also limited by the politics of the death penalty. We concluded that both the integrity of individual capital cases and the prospects for reform of the capital justice system are threatened by the intense and emotional politicization of the issue throughout much of the country.

15. The third subpart of our report addressed “Race Discrimination” in the administration of capital punishment. We noted the long history of discriminatory application of the death penalty from the earliest days of American history. We traced the continuing influence of race on capital sentencing outcomes and executions, observing the surprising link between the geographic distribution of modern executions and the geographic distribution of racialized vigilante violence (e.g., lynching) more than a century ago. We surveyed empirical studies demonstrating a robust bias in favor of seeking the death penalty for the murder of white as opposed to black victims in many jurisdictions, even those outside of the South and without strong histories of racialized vigilante violence. We discussed the reluctance of legislatures to limit the broad discretion exercised by capital juries, or to pass racial justice legislation creating remedies for discriminatory patterns in capital sentencing. We concluded that the combined influences of unchecked prosecutorial and jury discretion, underrepresentation of racial minorities in prosecutors’ offices and on juries, historical death penalty practices, and conscious or unconscious bias, make it extraordinarily difficult to disentangle race from the administration of the American death penalty.

16. The fourth subpart of our report addressed “Jury Confusion” in capital cases. The post-*Furman* efforts to reform the death penalty have been focused on rationalizing the capital sentencing process through a combination of statutory precision and focused jury instructions. These provisions precisely enumerate relevant aggravating and mitigating factors and carefully explain burdens of proof, the role of mitigation, inappropriate bases for decision (such as “mere sympathy”), and the process for reaching a final decision. However, a large body of empirical research by the Capital Jury Project (CJP),

which conducted interviews with over a thousand capital jurors across 14 states, demonstrates that these efforts have been ineffective in guiding jurors, and even quixotic in potentially masking the irreducible moral responsibility of capital juries. CJP research has shown that jurors often profoundly misunderstand the fundamentals of capital sentencing in that they may mistakenly believe that a death sentence is required, fail to understand the meaning of “aggravation” and “mitigation,” fail to consider mitigating evidence as mitigating (or even consider it as aggravating), and decide the sentencing issue before the penalty phase even begins, among other misapprehensions of their role. The hope that statutory reform along the lines of the MPC template would produce reasoned moral decisions by capital sentencing juries, rather than impulsive, arbitrary, or discriminatory ones, has not been realized in large part because jurors either misunderstand or ignore what they are instructed to do pursuant to modern capital statutes.

17. The fifth subpart of our report addressed “The Inadequacy of Resources, Especial Defense Counsel Services, in Capital Cases.” We surveyed the studies conducted by many state governments of the costs of capital litigation, all of which revealed that capital murder prosecutions cost substantially more than non-capital murder prosecutions, even when the cost of lifetime incarceration is included in the latter. As is the case with indigent defense funding generally, states and localities are reluctant or unable to cover the costs of capital litigation so as to ensure fairness and due process in the capital justice process. We reported the findings of the American Bar Association’s (ABA’s) Death Penalty Moratorium Implementation Project, which performed in-depth studies of the capital justice process in eight states. As part of these studies, the ABA specifically investigated the extent to which the states were in compliance with the ABA’s 2003 *Guidelines* for the provision of capital defense counsel services. Not a single state was found to be fully in compliance with any aspect of the ABA *Guidelines* studied. The lack of adequate resources for capital defense services may vary in degree across jurisdictions, but even relatively wealthy jurisdictions that profess a strong commitment to due process for indigent

defendants fall short in the provision of resources necessary for the complex and protracted litigation that capital prosecutions entail.

18. The sixth subpart of our report addressed the “Erroneous Conviction of the Innocent.” We surveyed the empirical literature on the raw number, rate, and causes of wrongful convictions in capital cases. We documented the evidence suggesting that wrongful convictions may be more common in capital than non-capital cases, notwithstanding the more elaborate procedures required in capital cases. Moreover, despite the horror and sympathy evoked by miscarriages of justice in capital cases, those who have been wrongfully convicted have often faced significant obstacles to relief, even after DNA testing exonerated them. In addition, many jurisdictions have failed to comply with ABA standards regarding preservation of and access to biological evidence. More generally, many jurisdictions have failed to adopt reforms aimed at preventing some of the most common causes of wrongful conviction, such as videotaping police interrogations to prevent false confessions, changing photo identification procedures to avoid misidentification, subjecting jailhouse informant testimony to greater pretrial scrutiny, and performing external independent audits of crime labs. This lack of political will seems to be driven by resistance by some in the law enforcement community and by the potential financial costs of adopting and implementing such reforms.

19. The seventh subpart of our report addressed the “Inadequate Enforcement of Federal Rights.” This section surveyed the many impediments to accessing a federal forum for litigation of federal constitutional claims. The Supreme Court’s strict restriction of the federal habeas forum when defense lawyers have procedurally defaulted constitutional claims in state courts has had the effect of denying defendants adjudication of their claims in *any* forum because of the errors of their counsel. Similarly, the Court’s retroactivity doctrine has limited the types of constitutional claims that may be brought in the federal habeas forum, creating a one-way ratchet by which the government, but not habeas petitioners, may seek the benefit of “new” law. Finally, and most broadly, the Antiterrorism and

Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA) erected numerous barriers to federal habeas relief, with the express intent of facilitating capital prosecutions and speeding executions. AEDPA imposed a strict statute of limitations for filing in federal court, stringent limitations on successive petitions, restrictions on the availability of evidentiary hearings to develop facts relating to an inmate's underlying claims, and, most significantly, a deferential standard of review of state-court adjudication of federal claims. The procedural maze created by the overlapping Court-made and statutory obstacles to federal habeas relief yields a system of habeas review in which even meritorious constitutional claims are rarely adjudicated and, if adjudicated, are rarely vindicated.

20. The eighth and final subpart of our report addressed "The Death Penalty's Effect on the Administration of Justice." Although capital cases represent only a very small part of the overall criminal justice system, the death penalty generates negative spillover effects to the broader system. First, the Court's "death is different" doctrine can work to normalize extremely punitive non-capital sanctions and to insulate them from constitutional scrutiny. Second, capital litigation has sometimes driven broader criminal policy, as illustrated by the passage of AEDPA, which restructured the entire system of federal habeas review for all claimants, capital and non-capital alike. The high political salience of the death penalty can produce a peculiar dynamic by which a small subset of American prisoners frames the debate over the appropriate operation of larger institutional frameworks. Third, the death penalty extracts a disproportionately large share of financial resources at every stage of the proceedings, including investigation, trial, appeal, post-conviction review, and incarceration. Fourth, in addition to these financial costs, the death penalty places enormous burdens on state and federal judicial resources. Finally, as discussed in the introductory section of our report, miscarriages of justice in capital cases pose a special threat to the legitimacy of the entire criminal justice system in the eyes of the public and of the world.

### **III. Evidence of Structural and Institutional Obstacles to a Minimally Adequate Death Penalty System Has Continued to Mount Since 2008**



21. Although we drafted our report for the ALI nearly 15 years ago, our overall conclusions remain as strong or stronger today, as evidence continues to mount that the system for administering capital punishment in the United States is irretrievably broken. Although there have been modest reforms in some places,<sup>43</sup> the overall picture is one of similar or even greater dysfunction in the American capital punishment system, whether one considers the protection of procedural rights, the reliability of capital verdicts, or the prevention of arbitrary and discriminatory sentencing.

22. The strongest evidence of the continuing problems in the American capital punishment system is the extent to which the death penalty has been abandoned in many parts of the country, either through formal abolition, gubernatorial moratorium, or the decisions of prosecutors or juries to decline to seek or impose it. In the introductory section of our ALI report, we noted a new ambivalence toward the practice of capital punishment in 2008, reflected in the diminishing numbers of executions and death sentences nationwide and in the increasing concentration of the death penalty in a small number of states. That ambivalence has grown into a dramatic and unprecedented decline in the use of the death penalty along every possible dimension. When we wrote our 2008 report, 36 states authorized the death penalty. Today, only 27 states do, with nine states having rejected their capital statutes in the interim either through legislative repeal or judicial invalidation. Three additional states (California, Oregon, and Pennsylvania) currently have gubernatorial moratoria in place. Legislative repeals, judicial invalidations, and gubernatorial moratoria all have been accompanied by detailed accounts of the many problems in the administration of capital punishment.

23. Even among jurisdictions that formally retain the death penalty, there has been a substantial decline in its use. More than two-thirds of the states in the country have not carried out an

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<sup>43</sup> For example, both Florida and Alabama no longer permit judges to override jury life verdicts in favor of death sentences; Louisiana no longer permits non-unanimous verdicts in criminal cases (after the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the practice in *Ramos v. Louisiana*, 140 S. Ct. 1390 (2020)); and Oregon recently replaced its capital statute with a significantly narrower one.

execution in the past decade.<sup>44</sup> In 2008, the average number of executions conducted in the prior three years was 43; today, that average is 17. Even if one discounts the COVID years and averages the three years prior to 2020, the average is still only 23—nearly a 50% decline. The decline in death sentencing is even more pronounced. In 2008, the three-year average was 121; today it is 23. Even discounting the COVID years, the average is still only 29—more than a 75% decline.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the concentration of the use of the death penalty in a few geographical regions has increased significantly. We noted in our 2008 report that the death penalty was concentrated in only a few states. Research since then has demonstrated the death penalty is growing even more concentrated geographically and in smaller geographic units, notably counties within states. A 2013 study revealed that the majority of death sentences in the United States are produced by only 2% of the nation’s counties.<sup>46</sup> These indicia, taken together, reflect a stunning diminishment of capital punishment in the United States that appears likely to continue for the foreseeable future, given that death sentences (which show the strongest decline) are the leading indicator of the scope of the future of the American death penalty.

24. The Supreme Court’s constitutional regulation of capital punishment has not changed in its fundamentals. The central tension between the conflicting constitutional commands of guided discretion and open-ended individualized sentencing continues unabated, and the Court’s doctrines addressing race discrimination, innocence, and standards for defense counsel offer no greater (and in some ways less) protection today than they did in 2008. Not a single claimant has prevailed on a federal constitutional claim based on patterns of racial discrimination in capital sentencing, nor has any

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<sup>44</sup> See Death Penalty Information Center, *Number of Executions by State and Region Since 1976*, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/executions/executions-overview/number-of-executions-by-state-and-region-since-1976>.

<sup>45</sup> The yearly count of executions and death sentences nationwide is available at Death Penalty Information Center, *Fact Sheet*, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/fact-sheet>.

<sup>46</sup> See RICHARD C. DIETER, *THE 2% DEATH PENALTY: HOW A MINORITY OF COUNTIES PRODUCE MOST DEATH CASES AT ENORMOUS COSTS TO ALL* (Oct. 2013), <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/dpic-reports/in-depth/the-2-death-penalty-how-a-minority-of-counties-produce-most-death-cases-at-enormous-costs-to-all>.

claimant prevailed on a federal constitutional claim based on actual innocence—despite ample reason to believe that discrimination and error continue to plague the administration of capital punishment, as discussed further below in paragraphs 28-30 and 36-37.

25. The Supreme Court’s Sixth Amendment jurisprudence regarding ineffective assistance of counsel in capital cases has actually scaled back its protections since 2008. In three cases that were decided shortly before our 2008 report, the Court seemed willing to subject capital sentencing presentations by the defense to more demanding scrutiny. The Court granted relief to three capital defendants whose lawyers had done insufficient investigation into mitigating evidence, finding that state court denials of relief in those cases were not just wrong, but unreasonably so even under the deferential standard of review required by AEDPA.<sup>47</sup> In each of the three cases, the Court cited approvingly to the *ABA Guidelines for the Appointment & Performance of Defense Counsel in Death Penalty Cases*, which offer comprehensive guidance for the conduct of counsel in capital cases. However, the Court has since backtracked on this greater degree of scrutiny in two ways. First, the Court has declined to use the ABA Guidelines to assess the effectiveness of capital defense counsel in the absence of findings that the Guidelines were both prevailing norms of practice at the time of defense counsel’s performance and not so detailed as to interfere with counsel’s independence—findings that the Court has thus far declined to make.<sup>48</sup> Second, the Court has frequently granted certiorari in recent years to reverse lower federal courts’ grants of relief on claims of ineffective assistance of counsel in capital cases, holding that the lower courts showed insufficient deference to the decisions of state courts under AEDPA. As the Court explained the required deference in a 2011 case,

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<sup>47</sup> See *Williams v. Taylor*, 529 U.S. 362 (2000); *Wiggins v. Smith*, 539 U.S. 510 (2003); and *Rompilla v. Beard*, 545 U.S. 374 (2005).

<sup>48</sup> See *Bobby v. Van Hook*, 558 U.S. 4, 8 n. 1 (2009) (explaining that for use of the ABA Guidelines to evaluate defense representation to be proper, “the Guidelines must reflect ‘[p]revailing norms of practice’ and ‘standard practice’ and must not be so detailed that they would ‘interfere with the constitutionally protected independence of counsel and restrict the wide latitude counsel must have in making tactical decisions’”) (internal citations omitted).

“[A] state prisoner must show that the state court’s ruling . . . was so lacking in justification that there was an error well understood and comprehended in existing law *beyond any possibility for fairminded disagreement*.”<sup>49</sup> The Court observed, “It bears repeating that even a strong case for relief does not mean the state court’s contrary conclusion was unreasonable. If this standard is difficult to meet, that is because it was meant to be.”<sup>50</sup> Applying this demanding standard, the Court recently reversed a grant of habeas relief in a capital case, noting that AEDPA grants state courts “even more latitude” in resolving claims of ineffective assistance of counsel because the Sixth Amendment framework involves “more general” rules and standards.<sup>51</sup> The Court further explained that deference by federal habeas courts includes not only identifying and rebutting every ground undergirding the state court decision, but also determining “what arguments or theories . . . could have supported” the state court’s holding, even if the state court did not articulate them.<sup>52</sup>

26. The politicization of capital punishment is a continued feature, given that it is woven into the fabric of our country’s democratic structure through the election of most prosecutors and judges. In the past two decades, a period of mostly falling murder rates, one might have expected to see capital punishment sharply decline in political salience in light of the waning “law and order” politics that dominated many electoral contests in the last decades of the twentieth century. However, the death penalty has remained a focal point of some political contests even in these times. For example, Florida Governor Rick Scott issued an executive order in 2017 removing State Attorney Aramis Ayala from the prosecution of a case involving the murder of a police officer after she announced that she would not seek the death penalty in any cases that came before her office. He subsequently stripped her of

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<sup>49</sup> *Harrington v. Richter*, 562 U.S. 86, 103 (2011) (emphasis added).

<sup>50</sup> *Id.* at 102.

<sup>51</sup> *Shinn v. Kayer*, 141 S. Ct. 517, 523 (2020).

<sup>52</sup> *Id.* at 524.

approximately 30 additional murder cases.<sup>53</sup> Scott’s successor, Governor Ron DeSantis, removed Ayala from another high-profile murder case in 2020, again citing her objections to the death penalty.<sup>54</sup> The battle between these governors and a locally elected prosecutor received statewide and national attention due to the high salience of the issue of capital punishment. On the federal level, President Trump made a concerted effort to carry out as many federal executions as possible in the months leading up to the 2020 election and the period prior to President Biden’s inauguration, despite not having made executions a priority earlier in his presidential term, a decision that one observer argued “can only be explained by the pursuit of political advantage.”<sup>55</sup>

27. Scholars and judges alike continue to document the political pressures on institutional actors around the issue of the death penalty. A 2014 study on judicial elections and the death penalty noted the continued salience of crime, even in times of declining murder rates. It found that “64% of advertisements [in judicial election campaigns] paid for by state parties in 2010 focused on the issue of crime[,] and various studies have highlighted judges’ incentives to avoid being labeled ‘soft on crime.’ The death penalty, in particular, has repeatedly been a flashpoint of campaigns, emerging in states from Ohio to Florida to California, among others.”<sup>56</sup> The same study found that “state supreme court decisions are considerably more likely to gain front page coverage in local newspapers if they involve the death penalty, holding other case characteristics constant.”<sup>57</sup> Judge William Fletcher of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals wrote an article detailing the effects that the politicization of the death penalty has

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<sup>53</sup> See WKMG, *Gov. Rick Scott wins legal battle against State Attorney Aramis Ayala*, 10 Tampa Bay (Aug. 31, 2017), <https://www.wtsp.com/article/news/local/gov-rick-scott-wins-legal-battle-against-state-attorney-aramis-ayala/67-469841835>.

<sup>54</sup> See News Service of Florida, *Aramis Ayala Yanked from Case by Second GOP Governor, This Time DeSantis*, TAMPA BAY TIMES (Jan. 31, 2020), <https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2020/01/31/aramis-ayala-yanked-from-case-by-second-gop-governor-this-time-desantis/>.

<sup>55</sup> David Allen Green, *Killing and the Campaign Trail: How Trump Scheduled Executions for Political Advantage*, PROSPECT MAGAZINE (Jan. 26, 2021), <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/donald-trump-united-states-capital-punishment-death-penalty>.

<sup>56</sup> See Brandice Canes-Wrone, Tom S. Clark & Jason P. Kelly, *Judicial Selection and Death Penalty Decisions*, 108 AM. POLITICAL SCI. REV. 23, 25 (2014) (citations omitted).

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

had in California. He noted that after three justices of the California Supreme Court were recalled by the voters in 1986 because of their pro-defendant rulings in death penalty cases, the rate of reversal in capital cases dropped from 40% (prior to the recall) to a mere 3.8% (after the recall).<sup>58</sup> Fletcher further argued that politicization of death penalty cases results in false convictions. Two key ingredients are that “[t]he police are under heavy pressure to solve a high-profile crime” and prosecutors have a combination of wide discretion and “absolute immunity from damage suits for activities undertaken in connection with litigation.”<sup>59</sup>

28. Race discrimination continues to be an ineradicable feature of capital punishment and the broader criminal justice system. A comprehensive report on race and the death penalty in the United States released in 2020 collected voluminous data on the continuing influence of race on the administration of capital punishment. The study reported evidence of bias based on the race of both victims and defendants, with the murders of white victims being more likely to be investigated and capitally charged, and defendants of color being more likely to be sentenced to death. The study also reported evidence of systemic exclusion of jurors of color from service in death penalty cases. Among the evidence referenced by the report was a 2015 meta-analysis of 30 studies showing that people accused of killing white victims were more likely than people accused of killing Black victims to face a capital prosecution; data showing that since executions resumed in 1977, 295 Black defendants have been executed for interracial murders of white victims, while only 21 white defendants have executed for interracial murders of Black victims; and data showing that the wrongful convictions of Black exonerees were 22% more likely to be linked to police misconduct.<sup>60</sup>

29. Since 2008, there have been numerous studies of race and the death penalty in individual

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<sup>58</sup> William A. Fletcher, *Our Broken Death Penalty*, 89 N.Y.U L. REV. 805, 821 (2014).

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* at 818.

<sup>60</sup> See NGOZI NDULUE, ENDURING INJUSTICE: THE PERSISTENCE OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN THE U.S. DEATH PENALTY, Death Penalty Information Center (Sept. 15, 2020), <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/dpic-reports/in-depth/enduring-injustice-the-persistence-of-racial-discrimination-in-the-u-s-death-penalty>.

states finding disparities based on the race of the victim, the race of the defendant, or both. For example, researchers updated the famous Baldus study from Georgia that we referenced in our ALLI report and that formed the basis for the narrowly unsuccessful constitutional challenge considered by the Supreme Court in *McCleskey v. Kemp*.<sup>61</sup> The researchers added information about who among those sentenced to death in Georgia were actually executed. The study concluded that the disparities that Baldus had found in the sentencing phase were considerably exacerbated at the execution stage.<sup>62</sup> Other researchers have studied the effects of race on the capital punishment systems of North Carolina (2011),<sup>63</sup> Delaware (2012),<sup>64</sup> and Colorado (2015).<sup>65</sup> Each of these studies found strong race effects, consistent with virtually all earlier studies in these states and elsewhere.

30. Two of the most influential state studies of race and the death penalty played key roles in the abolition of the death penalty in those states. Connecticut legislatively repealed its death penalty in 2012. At the legislative hearings, Professor John Donohue presented his research regarding racial disparities in the administration of the death penalty in Connecticut. During their debates, a number of the bill's supporters "expressed that Donohue's research was an important factor in their decision to vote to abolish the death penalty."<sup>66</sup> The legislative repeal was prospective only, and three years later, the Connecticut Supreme Court found that the death penalty violated the Connecticut constitution and

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<sup>61</sup> 481 U.S. 279 (1987). The original Baldus study analyzed more than 2,000 murder cases in the state of Georgia in the 1970s. The study found that defendants accused of killing white victims were 4.3 times more likely to receive the death penalty than defendants accused of killing Black victims. It also showed that Black defendants were more likely than white defendants to receive the death penalty.

<sup>62</sup> See Scott Phillips & Justin Marceau, *Whom the State Kills*, 55 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 602, 615 (2020) ("We have documented how sentencing and execution contribute independently, and jointly, to racial disparities in capital punishment.").

<sup>63</sup> See Glenn L. Pierce and Michael L. Radelet, *Race and Death Sentencing in North Carolina, 1980–2007*, 89 N.C. L. REV. 2119 (2011).

<sup>64</sup> See Sheri Johnson et al., *The Delaware Death Penalty: An Empirical Study*, 97 IOWA L. REV. 1925 (2012).

<sup>65</sup> See Meg Beardsley et al., *Disquieting Discretion: Race, Geography, and the Colorado Death Penalty in the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century*, 92 DENV. U. L. REV. 431 (2015).

<sup>66</sup> *State v. Santiago*, 318 A.3d 1, 158 (Conn. 2015) (Norcott and McDonald, JJ., concurring) (citing the remarks of Senator Donald E. Williams, Senator Edwin A. Gomes, Representative Bruce V. Morris, and Representative Charlie L. Stallworth).

applied that ruling retroactively to clear the state’s death row.<sup>67</sup> In doing so, the Court relied on studies demonstrating racial bias to bolster broader arguments regarding “caprice and bias” (i.e., arbitrariness) and the possibility of error. The Court emphasized that the use of empirical studies when determining legal questions is appropriate, stating that “appellate courts tasked with determining the content of law and policy may take notice of constitutional and legislative facts, such as historical sources and scientific and sociological studies.”<sup>68</sup> Three years later, in 2018, the Washington Supreme Court also held that its state’s death penalty violated its state constitution.<sup>69</sup> The Court relied on research by Professor Kathryn Beckett from the University of Washington that demonstrated that “capital cases involving Black defendants were between 3.5 and 4.6 times as likely to result in a death sentence as proceedings involving non-Black defendants.”<sup>70</sup> The Court explained that “[t]he most important consideration is whether the evidence shows that race has a meaningful impact on imposition of the death penalty”—and concluded that it did. Unlike the Connecticut Supreme Court, which relied on a broader range of concerns about the administration of the death penalty, the Washington Supreme Court rested its constitutional decision squarely on the evidence of racial discrimination.

31. Racial discrimination is not the only form of arbitrariness and bias that continues to affect the administration of the death penalty. Bias on the basis of gender, local geography, and availability of resources is also frequently documented along with racial bias.<sup>71</sup> Yet another concerning bias in the administration of capital punishment that gets less attention is the higher likelihood that the death penalty will be sought, imposed, or carried out against people who suffer from diagnosed mental illness. In 2009, the ACLU published a report documenting the “significant gaps in the legal protection accorded

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<sup>67</sup> *State v. Santiago*, 318 A.3d 1 (Conn. 2015).

<sup>68</sup> *Id.* at 78.

<sup>69</sup> *State v. Gregory*, 427 P.3d 621 (Wash. 2018).

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 633 (internal quotation marks omitted).

<sup>71</sup> See *Glossip v. Gross*, 576 U.S. 863, 920 (2015) (Breyer, J., dissenting) (documenting bias on the basis of “race, gender, local geography, and resources”).



severely mentally ill defendants charged with or convicted of a capital crime.”<sup>72</sup> In 2016, the ABA published a white paper on the topic noting the “inadequacy of existing legal mechanisms to address severe mental illness in capital cases,” despite our society’s improved understanding of mental illness.<sup>73</sup> Mental Health America (MHA), a nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness, has issued a policy statement on the death penalty and people with mental illnesses that documents how “[p]eople with serious mental illnesses are at a substantial disadvantage in defending themselves when they face criminal charges, and those difficulties are compounded when the charges are so serious that the death penalty is sought.”<sup>74</sup> The policy statement went on to observe that “[s]tigma and fear are significant factors in jury verdicts in such cases.”<sup>75</sup> Although a substantial majority of Americans say they oppose the death penalty for the mentally ill,<sup>76</sup> only one state (Ohio) has a statute forbidding the capital prosecution of those with serious mental illness, and that statute was passed only in 2021.<sup>77</sup> Statistical analysis demonstrates a strong tilt toward executing those who have received a diagnosis of mental illness at some point in their life: only 18% of the public have received such a diagnosis, as compared with 43% of those executed between 2000 and 2015.<sup>78</sup>

32. Evidence of jury confusion in capital cases also continues to mount. Although the data from the Capital Jury Project cited in our ALI study remains the best and most comprehensive window into

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<sup>72</sup> ACLU, MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE DEATH PENALTY 1 (May 5, 2009), <https://www.aclu.org/report/report-mental-illness-and-death-penalty>.

<sup>73</sup> ABA DEATH PENALTY DUE PROCESS REVIEW PROJECT, SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE DEATH PENALTY 1-2 (Dec. 2016) (capitalization omitted), [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/aba/SevereMentalIllnessandtheDeathPenalty\\_WhitePaper.pdf](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/aba/SevereMentalIllnessandtheDeathPenalty_WhitePaper.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA, POSITION STATEMENT 54: DEATH PENALTY AND PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS, <https://mhanational.org/issues/position-statement-54-death-penalty-and-people-mental-illnesses>.

<sup>75</sup> *Id.*

<sup>76</sup> Death Penalty Information Center, *POLL: Americans Oppose Death Penalty for Mentally Ill by 2-1* (Dec. 1, 2014), <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/news/poll-americans-oppose-death-penalty-for-mentally-ill-by-2-1>.

<sup>77</sup> Death Penalty Information Center, *Ohio Bars Death Penalty for People with Severe Mental Illness* (Jan. 11, 2021), <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/news/ohio-passes-bill-to-bar-death-penalty-for-people-with-severe-mental-illness>.

<sup>78</sup> Frank Baumgarten & Betsy Neill, *Does the Death Penalty Target People Who Are Mentally Ill? We Checked.*, WASH. POST (Apr. 3, 2017), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/03/does-the-death-penalty-target-people-who-are-mentally-ill-we-checked/>.

the comprehension of actual capital sentencing jurors, researchers since 2008 have conducted further studies primarily involving mock capital jurors. One such recent study used a real murder trial transcript to evaluate whether simplified jury instructions would improve jurors' understanding of key concepts. The study found that mock jurors do not understand aggravating and mitigating factors and the behaviors or circumstances that contribute to each, and that simplified instructions resulted in somewhat better but "still poor" understanding.<sup>79</sup> This study is just the most recent of many since 2008 that continue to demonstrate misunderstanding of key concepts by capital sentencing jurors, misconceptions that do not substantially improve with either simplified instructions or jury deliberation.<sup>80</sup>

33. Despite regular pleas for improvement, indigent defense services remain underfunded. 2013 was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright*,<sup>81</sup> and it produced a tremendous outpouring of conferences, symposia, and speeches on the ongoing crisis in the provision of indigent defense services.<sup>82</sup> The state of indigent defense in capital cases is no better and sometimes worse, given the greater complexity of capital cases, which demand greater expertise by

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<sup>79</sup> Shana L. Maier, et al., *Mock Jurors' Comprehension of Aggravating and Mitigating Factors: The Impact of Timing and Type of Sentencing Phase Instructions*, 16 APPLIED PSYCH. IN CRIM. JUST. 65, 65 (2021).

<sup>80</sup> See, e.g., Mona Lynch & Craig Haney, *Capital Jury Deliberation: Effects on Death Sentencing, Comprehension, and Discrimination*, 33 L. & HUM. BEHAV. 481, 481 (2009) (finding that jury deliberation "failed to improve characteristically poor instructional comprehension"); Amy E. Smith & Craig Haney, *Getting to the Point: Attempting to Improve Juror Comprehension of Capital Penalty Phase Instructions*, 35 L. & HUM. BEHAV. 339, 339 (2011) (finding that "significant comprehension problems" remained even after the implementation of simplified jury instructions); Marc. W. Patry & Steven D. Penrod, *Death Penalty Decisions: Instruction Comprehension, Attitudes, and Decision Mediators*, 13 J. FORENSIC PSYCH. PRAC. 204, 204 (2013) (reporting findings consistent with previous research showing "low comprehension of capital penalty instructions").

<sup>81</sup> 372 U.S. 335 (1963).

<sup>82</sup> For just a few examples, see *The Invention of Courts*, 143 DAEDALUS Issue 3 (2014) (special issue marking the anniversary of *Gideon v. Wainwright*); *Gideon at 50: How Far We've Come, How Far to Go* (Sept. 20, 2013) (Symposium hosted by the Charleston School of Law and the South Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense); *Answering Gideon's Call Outside the Courtroom: Integrated Policy Reform Strategies to Protect the Sixth Amendment Right to Counsel* (March 18, 2013) (one-day convening hosted by the Justice Programs Office of the School of Public Affairs at American University, in partnership with the National Legal Aid & Defender Association, the American Council of Chief Defenders, and the Washington College of Law at American University); *The Gideon Effect: Rights, Justice, and Lawyers Fifty Years After Gideon v. Wainwright*, 122 YALE L. J. Number 8 (2013) (special symposium by the Yale Law Journal).

counsel and greater resources at every stage. Studies conducted after 2008 continue to confirm that death penalty cases are vastly more expensive than non-capital ones. Upon reviewing fifteen state studies across the country between 2000 and 2016, researchers concluded that, on average, capital prosecutions impose \$700,000 more in costs than non-capital prosecutions.<sup>83</sup> They added: “It is a simple fact that seeking the death penalty is more expensive. *There is not one credible study, to our knowledge, that presents evidence to the contrary.*”<sup>84</sup>

34. The cost of capital punishment has continued to rise even further because of the vastly increased cost of carrying out executions. As drug manufacturers increasingly have refused to permit the use of their drugs in executions, corrections departments have turned instead to compounding pharmacies to buy drugs for use in lethal injection.<sup>85</sup> The costs of these drugs have skyrocketed over the past decade.<sup>86</sup> For example, in 2014, it cost Virginia \$250 to receive drugs directly from pharmaceutical manufacturers. In 2016, the state spent \$66,000 to obtain the drugs necessary for the next two executions—assuming “legal appeals [didn’t] continue beyond the drugs’ early-2017 expiration dates.”<sup>87</sup> Tennessee paid \$190,000 to acquire midazolam, vecuronium bromide, and potassium chloride between 2017 and 2020—a period during which only two executions took place. Missouri spent over

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<sup>83</sup> Peter A. Collins, Matthew J. Hickman & Robert C. Boruchowitz, *Proportionality, Cost, and Accuracy of Capital Punishment in Oklahoma*, in REPORT OF THE OKLAHOMA DEATH PENALTY COMMISSION app. 1B, at 228 (2017).

<sup>84</sup> *Id.* at 227 (emphasis in original). See also *Testimony Submitted to the Kentucky Senate: Hearings on the Costs of the Death Penalty Before the Standing Comm. on Judiciary* (2012) (statement of Richard Dieter, Executive Director, Death Penalty Information Center), 4–5 (“[A]ll of the studies conclude that the death penalty system is far more expensive than an alternative system in which the maximum sentence is life in prison”).

<sup>85</sup> See *Execution Costs Spike in Virginia; State Pays Pharmacy \$66k*, CBS NEWS (Dec. 12, 2016), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/execution-costs-spike-in-virginia-state-pays-pharmacy-66k/>; Sheila Burke, *Tennessee Supreme Court Upholds Lethal Injection Method*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Mar. 26, 2017), <https://apnews.com/article/20c6abc124f2421eb3a56bcb651340b3>; *Arizona Finds Pharmacist to Prepare Lethal Injections*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Oct. 27, 2020), <https://apnews.com/article/arizona-doug-ducey-phoenix-df8203ee5c11d43ca84ce79c77616fdd>.

<sup>86</sup> Lethal injection drugs are exponentially more difficult to acquire than they were in 2009. This is in large part due to the 2011 export ban by the European Union, which severed U.S. prisons from the last large-scale manufacturers of sodium thiopental.

<sup>87</sup> Ed Pilkington, *Revealed: Republican-led States Secretly Spending Huge Sums on Execution Drugs*, THE GUARDIAN (Apr. 9, 2021), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/09/revealed-republican-led-states-secretly-spending-huge-sums-on-execution-drugs>.

\$160,000 on lethal injections between 2015 and 2020, a time period in which it executed ten inmates.<sup>88</sup> In 2020, Arizona paid \$1.5 million for one thousand one-gram vials of pentobarbital sodium salt, to be shipped in “unmarked jars and boxes.”<sup>89</sup> All three of these latter states acquired their drugs through compounding pharmacies. Because of the difficulty of obtaining drugs for lethal injections, some states are now turning to alternative methods of execution, which generates the additional costs of litigation challenges.<sup>90</sup>

35. In our ALI report, we reviewed the detailed assessments conducted by the ABA of the provision of capital defense services in eight states, none of which were found to be in full compliance with any of the metrics that the ABA had set for effective capital representation. Since 2008, the ABA has conducted four more such state studies—of Kentucky, Missouri, Texas, and Virginia (although Virginia has since repealed its death penalty, and its assessment has been removed from the ABA’s website).<sup>91</sup> The second set of assessments, published between 2011 and 2013—confirm the prior pattern of deficiencies in capital representation. In particular and most concerning, they note the excessive caseloads of public defenders<sup>92</sup> and the prevalence of unqualified counsel at all stages of capital proceedings.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Id.*

<sup>89</sup> *Id.*

<sup>90</sup> Joseph Ax & Nate Raymond, *U.S. States Considering Alternative Execution Methods Face Legal Hurdles*, REUTERS (April 19, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-execution-idUSKBN17L142>.

<sup>91</sup> See generally American Bar Association, *Evaluating Fairness and Accuracy in Death Penalty Systems: The Kentucky Death Penalty Assessment Report—An Analysis of Kentucky’s Death Penalty Laws, Procedures, and Practices* (2011); American Bar Association, *Evaluating Fairness and Accuracy in Death Penalty Systems: The Missouri Death Penalty Assessment Report—An Analysis of Missouri’s Death Penalty Laws, Procedures, and Practices* (2011); and American Bar Association, *Evaluating Fairness and Accuracy in Death Penalty Systems: The Texas Death Penalty Assessment Report—An Analysis of Texas’s Death Penalty Laws, Procedures, and Practices* (2013). All of the assessments are available at [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/projects/death\\_penalty\\_due\\_process\\_review\\_project/state\\_death\\_penalty\\_assessments/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/projects/death_penalty_due_process_review_project/state_death_penalty_assessments/).

<sup>92</sup> *Missouri Report* at xxii; *Kentucky Report* at xxiv; *Texas Report* at 238.

<sup>93</sup> The *Kentucky Report* recounts the case of Gregory Wilson, in which the trial court hung a sign on the courtroom door that said, “PLEASE HELP. DESPERATE. THIS CASE CANNOT BE CONTINUED AGAIN.” One of the two attorneys who agreed to represent him had never tried a felony, and the other was “semi-retired,” with “no office, no staff, no copy machine and no law books.” *Kentucky Report* at xxiv.

36. Evidence also continues to mount regarding the wrongful conviction of the innocent. In our report to the ALI in 2008, we noted that the Death Penalty Information Center had recorded 129 exonerations in capital cases, using a strict definition of “exoneration.”<sup>94</sup> Today that number is 186, nearly 50% higher.<sup>95</sup> Now, “one person wrongfully convicted and condemned to die has been exonerated for every 8.3 prisoners who have been executed.”<sup>96</sup> In our ALI report, we wrote that “reasonable estimates [of the rate of error in capital cases] range from 2.3% to 5%.”<sup>97</sup> Today, the most authoritative estimate, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in 2014, “present[ed] a conservative” calculation that 4.1% of capital verdicts between 1973 and 2004 were erroneous.<sup>98</sup> That study explained that the current exoneration rate is an inapt proxy for the false conviction rate because courts convert most death sentences into life sentences; life-sentenced defendants, in turn, do not receive the searching review provided to those on death row. “With an error rate at trial over 4%,” the study concluded, “it is all but certain that several of the [then] 1,320 defendants executed since 1977 were innocent.”<sup>99</sup>

37. There is also strong evidence that wrongful conviction and racial bias are intertwined. A recent study found that “African Americans are only 13% of the American population but a majority of innocent defendants wrongfully convicted of crimes and later exonerated.”<sup>100</sup> This skewing is particularly pronounced in murder cases, as exonerations reveal that “innocent black people are about

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<sup>94</sup> See ALI Report at 38 & n.149.

<sup>95</sup> See Death Penalty Information Center, *Innocence Database*, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/policy-issues/innocence-database>.

<sup>96</sup> Death Penalty Information Center, *The Death Penalty in 2021: Year-End Report 16* (2021), <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/dpic-reports/dpic-year-end-reports/the-death-penalty-in-2021-year-end-report>.

<sup>97</sup> ALI Report at 38.

<sup>98</sup> Samuel R. Gross et al., *Rate of False Conviction of Criminal Defendants Who Are Sentenced to Death*, 111 PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, 7230, 7234 (2014).

<sup>99</sup> *Id.* at 7235.

<sup>100</sup> SAMUEL R. GROSS, ET AL., RACE AND WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES ii, National Registry of Exonerations, NewKirk Center for Science and Society, University of California, Irvine (Mar. 7, 2017), [https://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Documents/Race\\_and\\_Wrongful\\_Convictions.pdf](https://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Documents/Race_and_Wrongful_Convictions.pdf).

seven times more likely to be convicted of murder than innocent white people.”<sup>101</sup> Moreover, as noted above, empirical data show that the wrongful convictions of Black exonerees were 22% more likely to be linked to police misconduct.<sup>102</sup>

38. The enforcement of federal constitutional rights on federal habeas review continues to be inadequate, with some obstacles to relief even increasing since 2008. As noted above, the Supreme Court has been more vigorously policing federal courts’ deference under AEDPA to state court denials of relief for claims of ineffective assistance of counsel in capital cases.<sup>103</sup> In addition, the Court interpreted AEDPA in 2011 to deny evidentiary hearings in federal court in *all* cases in which there was a state court decision on the merits, precluding even the rare exceptions noted in the statute.<sup>104</sup> The Court has also tightened its non-retroactivity doctrine, eliminating last year one of the two exceptions to non-retroactivity on federal habeas review that had been announced in 1989.<sup>105</sup> And the law of procedural default continues to be, in the words of Justice Antonin Scalia, the “*principal escape route* from federal habeas.”<sup>106</sup> A federal judge whose Circuit (and whose own opinions) have been repeatedly reversed by the Supreme Court for too generously opening the federal court doors to issue habeas relief in capital cases, published a dire account of the state of federal habeas corpus in 2015, detailing the “unfortunate consequences” of “the Court’s ever increasing limitations on the development and enforcement of constitutional rights.”<sup>107</sup>

39. Finally, the death penalty continues to have the same two primary negative effects on the

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<sup>101</sup> *Id.*

<sup>102</sup> See *supra* ¶128.

<sup>103</sup> See *supra* ¶125.

<sup>104</sup> See *Pinholster v. Cullen*, 562 U.S. 86 (2011) (holding that §2254(e)(2) of AEDPA precludes an evidentiary hearing whenever the federal claim was adjudicated on the merits in state court proceedings).

<sup>105</sup> See *Edwards v. Vannoy*, 141 S. Ct. 1547 (2021) (overruling the exception to non-retroactivity for “watershed” rules of criminal procedure announced in *Teague v. Lane*, 489 U.S. 288, 311 (1989)).

<sup>106</sup> *Martinez v. Ryan*, 566 U.S. 1, 22 (2012) (Scalia, J., dissenting) (emphasis in original).

<sup>107</sup> See Stephen R. Reinhardt, *The Demise of Habeas Corpus and the Rise of Qualified Immunity: The Court’s Ever Increasing Limitations on the Development and Enforcement of Constitutional Rights and Some Particularly Unfortunate Consequences*, 113 MICH. L. REV. 1219, 1219 (2015) (capitalization omitted).

broader administration of criminal justice that we detailed in our 2008 ALI report. First, our report noted that the death penalty helps to normalize and entrench other extreme punishments, especially life sentences, with or without possibility of parole. Even though the Supreme Court has now limited the use of life without parole sentences for juvenile offenders,<sup>108</sup> the use of life sentences continues to grow, such that one in seven people in U.S. prisons is now serving some kind of a life sentence.<sup>109</sup> This growth has continued in recent years: 29 states had more people serving life sentences in 2020 than just four years earlier.<sup>110</sup> Second, our report described the disproportionate share of resources required by the administration of capital punishment, which draws needed resources away from the broader criminal justice system. This disproportion has been exacerbated by the rising cost of lethal injection drugs and the cost of litigation around alternative methods of execution, described above.<sup>111</sup>

#### **IV. The Kansas Death Penalty Statute Faces the Same Intractable Problems as the MPC**

40. The Kansas death penalty statute (Kan. Stat. Ann. §21-6617 et seq.), like the vast majority of statutes passed in response to the Supreme Court's decisions in *Furman* and *Gregg*, was explicitly modeled on the MPC. As in the MPC, the Kansas law bifurcates the guilt and sentencing determinations. As the MPC prescribes, the Kansas statute requires sentencing juries to unanimously find beyond a reasonable doubt that one or more statutory aggravating circumstances exists, and then to consider a list of statutory mitigating circumstances as well as all relevant non-statutory mitigating evidence. The Kansas lists of aggravating and mitigating circumstances mirror the lists in the MPC. While there are some minor variances from the precise language of the MPC, the Kansas law is clearly patterned closely on the model statute, sharing the MPC's evident faith that carefully worded guidance to capital

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<sup>108</sup> See *Graham v. Florida*, 560 U.S. 48 (2010); *Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. 460 (2012).

<sup>109</sup> See Ashley Nellis, *No End in Sight: America's Enduring Reliance on Life Imprisonment*, THE SENTENCING PROJECT (Feb. 17, 2021), <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/no-end-in-sight-americas-enduring-reliance-on-life-imprisonment/>.

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*

<sup>111</sup> See *supra* ¶134.

sentencers would be able to address the problems of arbitrariness and discrimination that plagued the pre-*Furman* administration of capital punishment. As our 2008 report to the ALI demonstrated, and as the previous section of this report to the court updates to present, that hope has not been realized.

41. Like more than two-thirds of states in the U.S., Kansas has not performed an execution in the past decade. But Kansas has a rather unique historical relationship to the death penalty, and its ambivalence about the death penalty runs deeper than that of most other retentionist states. Kansas has not conducted an execution in more than 50 years and has only 9 people currently under sentence of death—fewer, for example, than the less populous neighboring state of Nebraska, which legislatively repealed its capital statute in 2015 but saw it reinstated by referendum in 2016. Of all 27 states that currently permit capital punishment, Kansas was the last to reauthorize the death penalty after the Supreme Court’s invalidation of all prevailing statutes in 1972, not enacting its revised statute until 1994. In 2010, the Kansas Senate came within one vote of repealing the death penalty for aggravated murder and replacing it with life without possibility of parole.<sup>112</sup>

42. Kansas’s experience with the death penalty has also revealed the inadequacy of post-conviction proceedings and federal constitutional regulation to reform and rationalize the administration of capital punishment. The U.S. Supreme Court has twice reversed decisions of the Kansas Supreme Court on the grounds that the Kansas Court had interpreted the federal Eighth Amendment to extend too much protection to capital defendants. In *Kansas v. Marsh*,<sup>113</sup> the Kansas Supreme Court struck down Kansas’s death penalty scheme on the basis that Kansas’s statute violated the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment because it established a presumption in favor of death by directing imposition of the death penalty when aggravating and mitigating circumstances are in equipoise. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed, and Kansas’s death penalty was reinstated. In *Kansas v.*

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<sup>112</sup> See generally Death Penalty Information Center, *State and Federal Info: Kansas*, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/state-and-federal-info/state-by-state/kansas>.

<sup>113</sup> 548 U.S. 163 (2006).



*Carr*,<sup>114</sup> the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the Kansas Court's holding that the Eighth Amendment required a severance of the proceedings against the co-defendants who had been tried jointly, as well as the Kansas Court's separate holding that the Eighth Amendment requires capital sentencing juries to be instructed that mitigating circumstances need only be proved to the satisfaction of the individual juror and not beyond a reasonable doubt.

43. This is an illustrative reminder that the problems of juror misunderstanding in capital cases are endemic and difficult to eradicate, even in a state like Kansas with a vigilant judiciary. Kansas journalists covering capital cases have written repeatedly about the difficulty that courts face in explaining the complex and sometimes counter-intuitive capital system to lay jurors. For example, in the capital prosecution of Cornelius Oliver, potential confusion arose even before the sentencing phase. At the guilt phase, the jury had to evaluate Oliver's responsibility for capital murder in a case involving multiple murder victims and multiple possible killers when the statute elevated premeditated murder to capital murder if it involved the "killing of more than one person as part of the same act or transaction or in two or more acts or transactions connected together or constituting parts of a common scheme or course of conduct."<sup>115</sup> The jury had to "sort through a list of crimes that sound similar yet carry different weight in the legal system," explained the *Wichita Eagle*. "The state's theory is that [one victim] died first. So when [three others] died, the crime became capital." However, "if jurors choose instead to find Oliver guilty on four counts of [simple] premeditated murder, there is no penalty phase." And, "[i]f that's not complicated enough," continued the *Eagle*, "Oliver wasn't the only one in the Erie house who could have committed murder."<sup>116</sup> Coverage of the later capital prosecution of John Robinson emphasized the confusion that could arise in determining a capital defendant's responsibility for a

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<sup>114</sup> 577 U.S. 108 (2016).

<sup>115</sup> Kan. Stat. Ann. §21-5401(6).

<sup>116</sup> Ron Sylvester, *Oliver Jury Faces Array of Decisions*, WICHITA EAGLE (Dec. 29, 2001), at 1A.

murder “pursuant to a contract or agreement to kill”<sup>117</sup> when the defendant hired someone else to do the killing and was guilty of capital murder only as an accomplice. “Prosecutors say aiding and abetting—which makes someone who helps plan a murder as guilty as the person who does the killing—can be difficult for jurors to comprehend, especially in cases where the death penalty is at stake.”<sup>118</sup>

44. Kansas is also no stranger to the politicization of the death penalty. The gruesome horror of what has come to be known as the Wichita Massacre gave rise to a flood of media attention. The capital sentences of the Wichita defendants Jonathan and Reginald Carr were first (briefly) invalidated when the Kansas Supreme Court struck down the state’s death sentencing provisions in *Marsh*.<sup>119</sup> After the U.S. Supreme Court reversed that ruling, the Kansas Supreme Court directly overturned the Carr brothers’ death sentences on appeal, a ruling that was also reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Kansas ruling in the *Carr* case led the Governor to renew calls for a state constitutional amendment to change the way justices are selected for the Kansas Supreme Court.<sup>120</sup> The *Carr* case and the death penalty more generally motivated at least one appointment to the Court, as the Governor himself acknowledged.<sup>121</sup> And they also became the focal point of the next gubernatorial contest, dominating the debates between Sam Brownback and Paul Davis.<sup>122</sup> Paradoxically, the infrequency of capital cases in Kansas heightens their sensitivity. “With death penalty cases so rare in Kansas,” said the *Wichita Eagle*, “the resulting court cases have attracted strong public attention.”<sup>123</sup> And, importantly, the pressures of high-profile capital cases are felt not only by public officials, but also by jurors. In the *Carr*

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<sup>117</sup> Kan. Stat. Ann. §21-5401(2).

<sup>118</sup> Ron Sylvester, *Prosecutors Explain Aiding, Abetting to Jury*, WICHITA EAGLE (Sept. 28, 2008), at 3A.

<sup>119</sup> See *supra* ¶42.

<sup>120</sup> See Staff, *In Carr Brothers Case, Supreme Court Says Kansas Wrongly Overturned Death Sentences*, WICHITA EAGLE (Jan. 20, 2016), at 1A.

<sup>121</sup> Bryan Lowry, *Caleb Stegall to Take Seat on Kansas Supreme Court in December*, WICHITA EAGLE (Sept. 12, 2014), <https://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/election/article3204377.html> (noting that Governor Brownback maintained that “Stegall, a former prosecutor, would bring a needed perspective to the court on death penalty cases”).

<sup>122</sup> Dion Lefler, *Carr Brothers’ Case Highlights Bitter Debate Between Sam Brownback and Paul Davis*, WICHITA EAGLE (Oct. 22, 2014), <https://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/election/article3204377.html#storylink=cpy>.

<sup>123</sup> Ron Sylvester, *Oliver Seeks to Be Tried Elsewhere*, WICHITA EAGLE (Nov. 22, 2001), at 1B.

case, for example, the community's influence was so powerful that one woman "said she'd find it difficult to vote for acquittal even if the state didn't prove its case, because of community pressure."<sup>124</sup>

45. There are demonstrated and acknowledged racial disparities in the Kansas criminal justice system in general, and in its administration of the death penalty in particular. Analysis completed by the Wichita Bar Association in June 2021 concluded that Sedgwick County jury panels "tend to lack the racial and ethnic diversity of our community."<sup>125</sup> Moreover, research and analysis by other experts in this case demonstrate additional forms of disparity and discrimination in the administration of capital punishment in Kansas. For example, a new report by Professor Frank Baumgartner shows that racial disparities exist in death penalty charging and sentencing for capital-eligible crimes in Kansas. New research, including a community survey conducted in Sedgwick County by Professor Mona Lynch shows that the death qualification process in Kansas is likely to exclude people of color and women from jury service in capital cases. The report of *Batson* decision making in Kansas cases by Professor Elisabeth Semel shows that "prosecutors across Kansas use peremptory strikes to disproportionately remove African-American and Latinx citizens" from capital juries in the state, and that *Batson* offers inadequate protection from racial discrimination in the jury selection process. More generally, research by Professor Shawn Leigh Alexander describes the history of racial bias in the Kansas criminal justice system.

46. Disparities based on race are not the only kind of concerning disparity that affect the administration of capital punishment in Kansas. As noted above, the research of Professor Mona Lynch demonstrates that the process of death qualification in capital cases works to exclude women as well as people of color. In addition, a 2004 Report of the Kansas Judicial Council Death Penalty Advisory

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<sup>124</sup> Ron Sylvester, *Six Inch Closer to Serving on Carr Jury*, WICHITA EAGLE (Sept. 24, 2002), at 3B.

<sup>125</sup> WICHITA BAR ASSOCIATION, EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW: REPORT OF THE RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE WICHITA BAR ASSOCIATION 5 (June 4, 2021), [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.wichitabar.org/resource/resmgr/files/wba\\_racial\\_justice\\_report\\_06.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.wichitabar.org/resource/resmgr/files/wba_racial_justice_report_06.pdf).

Committee noted that there are significant geographic disparities in whether capital charges are brought to trial or result in death sentences, with capital defendants in Sedgwick County being “much more likely” to be taken to trial and sentenced to death.<sup>126</sup> Finally, Kansas’ extremely narrow formulation of the insanity defense, recently upheld against constitutional challenge by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Kahler v. Kansas*,<sup>127</sup> suggests that the under-protection of capital defendants with severe mental illness, described more generally above,<sup>128</sup> is particularly likely in Kansas.

47. As is the case in virtually every jurisdiction, the provision of indigent defense services faces substantial resource challenges in Kansas. A 2020 Report by the Board of Indigents’ Defense Services described “dangerously high caseloads, . . . long suppressed compensation, and historic lack of resources”<sup>129</sup>—challenges that have been greatly exacerbated by the state budget crisis precipitated by the COVID 19 pandemic. The need for resources is even greater in capital cases, as research has shown that in Kansas, as elsewhere, capital cases are substantially more expensive than non-capital prosecution of the same or similar matters. A 2014 report by the Judicial Council Death Penalty Advisory Committee found that both the Board of Indigents’ Defense Services and the district courts “incur costs in trial cases that are 3 to 4 times higher in cases where the death penalty is sought than in cases where it is not.”<sup>130</sup> The Kansas report concluded that its findings were consistent with the findings from other jurisdictions that the costs of death cases are “significantly higher” than non-death cases.<sup>131</sup> Professor Philip Cook another expert in this case, and Frank Baumgartner have completed a study that shows that,

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<sup>126</sup> KANSAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL, REPORT THE KANSAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL DEATH PENALTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CERTAIN ISSUES RELATED TO THE DEATH PENALTY 10 (Nov. 12, 2004), [https://kansasjudicialcouncil.org/Documents/Studies%20and%20Reports/Previous%20Judicial%20Council%20Studies/PDF/Death\\_Penalty\\_Adv\\_Comm\\_Nov04.pdf](https://kansasjudicialcouncil.org/Documents/Studies%20and%20Reports/Previous%20Judicial%20Council%20Studies/PDF/Death_Penalty_Adv_Comm_Nov04.pdf).

<sup>127</sup> 140 S. Ct. 1021 (2020).

<sup>128</sup> See *supra* ¶31.

<sup>129</sup> THE BOARD INDIGENTS’ DEFENSE SERVICES, A REPORT ON THE STATUS OF PUBLIC DEFENSE IN KANSAS 5 (Sept. 2020), <http://www.sbids.org/forms/Report%209-30-2020.pdf>.

<sup>130</sup> KANSAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL, REPORT OF THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL DEATH PENALTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE 15 (Feb. 13, 2014), <https://kansasjudicialcouncil.org/Documents/Studies%20and%20Reports/2015%20Reports/death%20penalty%20cost%20report%20final.pdf>.

<sup>131</sup> *Id.*

since the 2014 Judicial Council report, the cost of capital cases in Kansas remains dramatically higher than the cost on non-capital cases.

48. The issue of the wrongful conviction of the innocent has also been a problem in Kansas, as in the rest of the United States. Wrongful convictions in non-capital cases in Kansas have occurred in many counties and have occurred across the gamut of crimes. Some were robberies.<sup>132</sup> Others were rapes.<sup>133</sup> Many were murders.<sup>134</sup> And these wrongful convictions occurred across numerous Kansas counties: Clay,<sup>135</sup> Douglas,<sup>136</sup> Jefferson,<sup>137</sup> Johnson,<sup>138</sup> Riley,<sup>139</sup> Sedgwick,<sup>140</sup> Seward,<sup>141</sup> Shawnee,<sup>142</sup> and Wyandotte.<sup>143</sup> Kansas' wrongful convictions, however, do not tell the whole story. The State has also

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<sup>132</sup> See, e.g., Joe Robertson, *17 Years Later, She Laments About Mistakes That Led to the Wrong Man Getting Imprisoned*, WICHITA EAGLE (June 13, 2017), <https://www.kansas.com/news/nation-world/national/article155939579.html> ("Tamara Scherer . . . says she told investigators and prosecutors this all along — 'I didn't get a good look at his face.'").

<sup>133</sup> See, e.g., Hurts Laviana, *Settlement Reached in Wrongful Conviction*, WICHITA EAGLE (Feb. 7, 2010), at 1A; Melissa Hellmann, Associated Press, *Kansas Weighing Rules for Handling Eyewitnesses to Crimes*, WICHITA EAGLE (Mar. 28, 2016), <https://www.kansas.com/news/local/crime/article68588002.html>.

<sup>134</sup> See e.g., Associated Press, *Court Rejects Liberal Man's Murder Conviction Over Lie by Witness*, WICHITA EAGLE (Jul. 5, 2004), at 3B; Luke Nozicka & Katie Bernard, *Family of Late Kansas Exoneree Says Jailhouse Informant Bill Could Have Saved His Life*, WICHITA EAGLE (Mar. 17, 2021), <https://www.kansas.com/news/state/article249951764.html>.

<sup>135</sup> See Roxana Hegeman, *Kansas Has Paid 2 of 5 Claims for Wrongful Conviction*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (May 26, 2019), <https://apnews.com/article/fee472c2f95747b9a41437866008eef4>; see also <https://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Pages/browse.aspx?View={b8342ae7-6520-4a32-8a06-4b326208baf8}&SortField=State&SortDir=Asc&FilterField1=State&FilterValue1=Kansas>.

<sup>136</sup> Shaun Hittle, *Man Tries to Rebuild Life After Serving Time for Crime He Says He Didn't Commit*, LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD (Oct. 16, 2011), <https://www2.ljworld.com/news/2011/oct/16/man-tries-rebuild-life-after-serving-time-crime-he/>.

<sup>137</sup> See Roy Wenzl & Travis Heying, *Wrongly Imprisoned Man Learns to Forgive*, WICHITA EAGLE (Mar. 13, 2016).

<sup>138</sup> Joe Robertson, *17 Years Later, She Laments About Mistakes That Led to the Wrong Man Getting Imprisoned*, WICHITA EAGLE (June 13, 2017), <https://www.kansas.com/news/nation-world/national/article155939579.html>.

<sup>139</sup> See Hurts Laviana, *Settlement Reached in Wrongful Conviction*, WICHITA EAGLE (Feb. 7, 2010), at 1A; Jim Suhr, Associated Press, *Freed Inmate Faces Compensation Challenge*, WICHITA EAGLE (Dec. 14, 2014).

<sup>140</sup> AG Derek Schmidt: *Fourth Mistaken-Conviction Lawsuit Concluded* (Apr. 14, 2020), <https://ag.ks.gov/media-center/news-releases/2020/04/14/ag-derek-schmidt-fourth-mistaken-conviction-lawsuit-concluded>.

<sup>141</sup> Associated Press, *Court Rejects Liberal Man's Murder Conviction Over Lie by Witness*, WICHITA EAGLE (July 5, 2004), at 3B.

<sup>142</sup> See Melissa Hellmann, Associated Press, *Kansas Weighing Rules for Handling Eyewitnesses to Crimes*, WICHITA EAGLE (Mar. 28, 2016), <https://www.kansas.com/news/local/crime/article68588002.html>.

<sup>143</sup> See Luke Nozicka & Katie Bernard, *Family of Late Kansas Exoneree Says Jailhouse Informant Bill Could Have Saved His Life*, WICHITA EAGLE (Mar. 17, 2021), <https://www.kansas.com/news/state/article249951764.html>; *Settlement Approved With Wrongfully Convicted Kansas Man*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (June 25, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/ks-state-wire-kansas-a775050e5a4069b6eb1dfc434d88c689>; Roxana Hegeman, *Kansas Fights Claim of Man Wrongly Imprisoned for 23 Years*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Aug. 21, 2019).

brought mistaken *charges* in capital cases. For example, prosecutors erred in originally seeking Gentry Bolton's death. When two slayings occurred at convenience stores in the span of a few days, fears mounted across the State, and a manhunt ensued.<sup>144</sup> Prosecutors charged Bolton for both killings.<sup>145</sup> For one murder, they sought the death penalty.<sup>146</sup> But it turned out that Bolton was innocent in that case. Instead, "authorities conceded they had the wrong man and later charged" another.<sup>147</sup>

49. Other expert reports elaborate further on the problem of wrongful conviction of innocent people in Kansas. Tricia Bushnell, Executive Director of the Midwest Innocence Project, submitted evidence on the prevalence and devastating impact of wrongful convictions generally and specifically with regard to Kansas. Kansas exoneree, Floyd Bledsoe, who spent 16 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, has prepared a report showcasing the destructive impact of wrongful convictions on exonerees' mental, physical, and financial health.

50. Finally, the Kansas death penalty has deleterious effects on the broader administration of justice in the same two primary ways addressed above and discussed in our ALI report.<sup>148</sup> First, the death penalty tends to normalize and legitimize other serious punishments. When death is the punishment for the most serious murders, it creates a vacuum that generates an upward pressure on sentences for lesser murders and other forms of homicide. One can see such escalation in recent Kansas law: in 2014, the Kansas legislature passed HB 2490, which included amendments to the sentencing provisions for premeditated first-degree murder, attempted capital murder, and felony murder. The bill increased the default sentence for premeditated first-degree murder committed on or after July 1, 2014 from a "Hard 25" to a "Hard 50" sentence, meaning that defendants sentenced under the new bill now

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<sup>144</sup> See *Killer Has Convenience Store Clerks on Edge*, SALINA JOURNAL (Jan. 4, 1998), at A3.

<sup>145</sup> See *Man Sought in Two Killings at KCK Convenience Stores*, WICHITA EAGLE (Jan. 2, 1998), at 10A.

<sup>146</sup> Associated Press, *Death Penalty Sought Against Slaying Suspect*, SALINA JOURNAL (Jan. 14, 1998), at A5.

<sup>147</sup> *Man Convicted in Killing of Convenience Store Clerk*, WICHITA EAGLE (Dec. 13, 1998), at 23A.

<sup>148</sup> See *supra* ¶139.

become eligible for parole on a life sentence after 50 years, rather than after 25 years.<sup>149</sup> The bill also imposed the “Hard 25” sentence for attempted capital murder (previously a severity level 1 felony) and felony murder (previously a “Hard 20” sentence).<sup>150</sup> Second, the high cost of capital trials, appeals, post-conviction review, and executions diverts precious resources away from an already-strained criminal justice system. The substantially higher resources required by capital prosecutions in Kansas,<sup>151</sup> combined with the spiraling cost of lethal injection drugs and the economic pressures of the COVID 19 pandemic, only exacerbate this resource drain.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Steiker". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

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Carol Steiker

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<sup>149</sup> See KANSAS LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT, KANSAS LEGISLATOR BRIEFING BOOK 5 (2019), [http://www.kslegresearch.org/KLRD-web/Publications/BriefingBook/2019\\_briefing\\_book.pdf](http://www.kslegresearch.org/KLRD-web/Publications/BriefingBook/2019_briefing_book.pdf). However, the sentencing judge may still impose a “Hard 25” sentence for premeditated first-degree murder if the judge, after reviewing mitigating factors, finds “substantial and compelling reasons” to impose the lesser sentence. *Id.*

<sup>150</sup> See *id.*

<sup>151</sup> See *supra* ¶147.

# Appendix 1



# CAROL S. STEIKER

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- *Henry J. Friendly Professor of Law*
- *Dean's Special Advisor on Public Service*

I teach, research, and write in the broad field of criminal justice, with an emphasis on the legal regulation of capital punishment. During the 1996-97 year, I was a Fellow with Harvard University's Program in Ethics and the Professions, and I remain a faculty affiliate of that Program (now the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics). From 2015-2020, I co-directed the Harvard Criminal Justice Policy Program.

## EDUCATION

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### LEGAL

#### Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA

J.D. *magna cum laude*, 1986; President, *Harvard Law Review*, Volume 99 (the second woman to hold the position of President in the *Law Review's* then 99-year history)

### POST-GRADUATE

#### Fulbright Grant, 1982-83

I was a teaching assistant in a French *lycée* and a student at the University of Languages and Letters in Grenoble, France.

### COLLEGE

#### Harvard-Radcliffe Colleges, Cambridge, MA

A.B. *summa cum laude*, *Phi Beta Kappa* in History and Literature, 1982

## PRIOR EMPLOYMENT

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1988-1992

#### Staff Attorney, Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia

I have represented indigent defendants at all stages of the criminal process—from arrest through trial, appeal, and application for post-conviction relief.

1987 Term

#### Law Clerk, Justice Thurgood Marshall, United States Supreme Court

1986 Term

#### Law Clerk, Judge J. Skelly Wright, Federal Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

## BAR ADMISSIONS

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2006

U.S. Supreme Court Bar

1988

District of Columbia Bar

1987

New York State Bar

## **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & PUBLIC EDUCATION**

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### **Ongoing**

2020 to present	Faculty Affiliate, Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, Harvard Kennedy School of Government
2018 to present	Co-Chair, Real Colegio Complutense Study Group, “Studies on Life and Human Dignity”
2014 to present	Fellow, American Bar Foundation
2014 to present	Member, American Law Institute
2011 to present	Adviser, American Law Institute Model Penal Code Project (Sexual Assault and Related Offenses)
2009 to present	Advisory Board, Racing Horse Productions (documentary film company that makes films on social issues relating to criminal justice)
2006 to present	Advisory Board, Legal Scholarship Network: Corrections and Sentencing Law and Policy Series
2002 to present	Board of Editors, <i>Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law</i>
1999 to present	Editor, Legal Scholarship Network: Harvard Public Law and Legal Theory Paper Series
1997 to present	Faculty Associate, Harvard University's Program in Ethics and the Professions
1995 to present	Board of Trustees, <i>Harvard Law Review</i>

### **Completed**

2021	Expert Consultant, California Committee on Revision of the Penal Code, presentation on reforming or abolishing the California death penalty
2021	Discussant, “An Examination of the Death Penalty in America,” WilmerHale podcast, <i>In the Public Interest</i> (with Seth Waxman)
2021	Discussant, “Death Penalty Debate,” University of Virginia Federalist Society (with former federal prosecutor William Otis)
2013-2021	Member, Board of Syndics, Harvard University Press
2015-2020	Faculty Co-Director, Criminal Justice Policy Program at Harvard Law School
2010-2020	Advisory Board, American Constitution Society, Boston Chapter

2015-2018	Member, American Bar Association Death Penalty Due Process Review Project
2016	Expert Witness, <i>U.S. v. Donald Fell</i> , on the constitutionality of the federal death penalty
2011-2015	Board Member, Committee for Public Counsel Services for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (appointed by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to the 15-member Board that oversees the appointment and supervision of counsel for indigent clients)
2012	Expert Consultant, Meeting of U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial summary or arbitrary executions and U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment
2012	Speaker, Inaugural Women in Public Service Project, Wellesley College
2011-2013	Judge and participant, Harvard/Stanford International Junior Faculty Forum
2011	Expert Witness, Montana State Legislature, (hearing on Senate Bill 185 to abolish the death penalty)
2010, 2014, 2016	Speaker, Federal Judicial Center (presentations on capital punishment and constitutional law)
2010-2013	Advisory Board, “Preventive Justice” research project, U.K. grant to researchers Andrew Ashworth and Lucia Zedner, Oxford University
2009	Speaker, Aspen Ideas Festival, Aspen Institute, summer 2009 (Justice and Society track, presentation on capital punishment in America)
2009	<i>Amicus Curiae, Addison v. New Hampshire</i> , No. 2008-0495 ( <i>amicus</i> on behalf of first death-sentenced inmate in New Hampshire in 70 years) (with retired Justice Deborah Poritz of the New Jersey Supreme Court)
2008	Consultant, American Law Institute (wrote report on the death penalty that led the ALI to withdraw the death penalty provisions of the Model Penal Code) (with Jordan Steiker)
2008	Participant, American Bar Association Roundtable on “Second Look” Sentencing Reforms, December 2008
2007	Co-Counsel, <i>Smith v. Texas</i> , 127 S. Ct. 1686 (2007) (pro-bono representation of Texas death row inmate; death sentence vacated by Supreme Court) (with Jordan Steiker)
2007	Faculty, United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico, “Capital Punishment in the United States” (with Jordan Steiker), October 5, 2007

- 2007 Expert Witness, Massachusetts Joint Committee on Criminal Justice, re: "An Act Reinstating the Death Penalty in the Commonwealth," May 9, 1997; July 14, 2005; and October 23, 2007
- 2004 Counsel for *Amicus Curiae*, *U.S. v. Dansby* (D. Mass.) and *U.S. v. Gudiel-Lopez* (D.R.I) (challenging constitutionality of the "Feeney Amendment" to the PROTECT Act; both challenges denied in 2004)
- 2002 Board of Editors, *Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice* (Macmillan 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2002)
- 2001 Faculty, Flaschner Judicial Institute, "Judicial Involvement in Plea Negotiations," May 24, 2001
- 1997, 1999 Faculty, National Practice Institute, Continuing Professional Education, "Current Issues in Criminal Justice," March, 1997; March, 1999
- 1995-1997 Consultant to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Committee on Juvenile Justice
- 1996 Faculty, Massachusetts Trial Court, Judicial Institute, "Approaching the Bench: The Art and Skill of Judging for the Newer Judge," May 1996
- 1995-1996 Participant, Harvard University's Mind/Brain/Behavior Working Group on Drugs and Addiction
- 1995-1996 Board of Directors, Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services Corporation (CASLS)
- 1995 Expert Witness, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing, "The Jury and the Search for Truth," March 7, 1995

#### **AWARDS, GRANTS, AND FELLOWSHIPS**

- 2018 Albert M. Sacks-Paul A. Freund Award for Teaching Excellence, Harvard Law School
- 2017 Robert W. Hamilton Book Award for *Courting Death*, University of Texas
- 2017 Dean's Writing Prize for Exceptional Scholarship, Harvard Law School
- 2014 Rita E. Hauser Fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University
- 2011 Endowed Chair, the Henry J. Friendly Professorship of Law, Harvard University

- 2011 Radcliffe Institute “Exploratory Seminar” Grant for seminar, “Comparative Perspectives on the Death Penalty” (with Moshik Temkin, Harvard Kennedy School of Government)
- 2008 Hugo Adam Bedau Award for influential scholarship, Massachusetts Citizens Against the Death Penalty
- 2007 Endowed Chair, the Howard J. and Katherine W. Aibel Professorship of Law, Harvard University
- 2006 Dean’s Writing Prize for Exceptional Scholarship, Harvard Law School
- 1996 Faculty Fellowship with the Harvard University Program on Ethics and the Professions (now the Safra Center for Ethics)

### **LAW SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

*Law School:* In addition to serving as the Dean’s Special Advisor on Public Service since 2003, and as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs from 1998-2001, I have served on the Admissions Committee, the Clinical Education Committee, the Entry-Level Appointments Committee, the Public Interest Committee, and the Strategic Planning Committee. I chaired the 2009-10 Public Service Initiative Task Force that developed the law school’s Public Service Venture Fund, which distributes \$1 million yearly in public service grants to HLS graduates, beginning in 2013.

*University:* I have served on the Law School Dean Search Committee (2008 and 2017), the University-wide Public Service Committee, the Committee on Presidential Public Service Fellows, the Honorary Degrees Committee, the Mahindra Humanities Center Post-Doctoral Fellows Committee, the Board of Syndics of Harvard University Press, and the Committee to Visit Harvard College.

### **REPRESENTATIVE PUBLICATIONS (SINCE 2005)**

#### **Books**

- 2022 *A Very Short Introduction to Capital Punishment* (forthcoming Oxford University Press 2022) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2019 *Comparative Capital Punishment* (Edward Elgar 2019) (with Jordan Steiker, ed.)
- 2016 *Courting Death: The Supreme Court and Capital Punishment* (the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2016) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2012 *The Political Heart of Criminal Procedure: Essays on Themes of William J. Stuntz* (Cambridge University Press 2012) (with Michael Klarman and David Skeel, eds.)
- 2007 *Criminal Law and Its Processes: Cases and Materials*, (Aspen 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> eds. 2007 and 2012) (with Sanford Kadish, Stephen Schulhofer, and Rachel Barkow)

- 2006 *Criminal Procedure Stories* (ed., Foundation Press 2006)
- Book Chapters**
- 2020 *Judicial Abolition of the American Death Penalty under the Eighth Amendment: The Most Likely Path*, in *The Eighth Amendment and Its Future in a New Age of Punishment* (Meghan J. Ryan & William W. Berry III, eds., Cambridge University Press 2020) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2019 *Capital Punishment in the Supreme Court 2018 Term*, in *Supreme Court Review* (Steven D. Schwinn, ed., American Constitution Society 2019) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2018 *Constitutional Regulation of Contested Social Issues: Lessons from the U.S. Supreme Court's "Experiment" with Capital Punishment*, in *Nouveaux regards sur des modèles classiques de démocratie constitutionnelle: États Unis, Europe* (Eleonora Bottini, Bernard Harcourt, Pasquale Pasquino, Otto Pfersmann, eds., 2018)
- 2018 *Aggravating and Mitigating Evidence in Capital Cases*, in *Routledge Handbook on Capital Punishment* (Robert M. Bohm and Gavin Lee, eds., Routledge 2018) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2017 *Capital Punishment*, in *Reforming Criminal Justice* (Erik Luna, ed., The Academy for Justice 2017) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2015 *Criminal Procedure*, in *The Oxford Handbook of the U.S. Constitution* (Mark Tushnet, Mark A. Graber, and Sanford Levinson, eds., Oxford University Press 2015)
- 2014 *"To See a World in a Grain of Sand": Dignity and Indignity in American Criminal Justice*, in *The Punitive Imagination: Law, Justice, and Responsibility* (Austin Sarat, ed., University of Alabama Press 2014)
- 2013 *Proportionality as a Limit on Preventive Justice: Promises and Pitfalls*, in *Prevention and the Limits of the Criminal Law* (Andrew Ashworth, Lucia Zedner, and Patrick Tomlin, eds., Oxford University Press 2013)
- 2012 *The Mercy Seat*, in *The Political Heart of Criminal Procedure: Essays on Themes of William J. Stuntz* (Michael Klarman, David Skeel, and Carol Steiker, eds., Cambridge University Press 2012)
- 2011 *The Death Penalty and Deontology*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Criminal Law* (John Deigh & David Dolinko, eds., Oxford University Press 2011)
- 2010 *Criminalization and the Criminal Process: Prudential Mercy as a Limit on Penal Sanctions in an Era of Mass Incarceration*, in *The Boundaries of the Criminal Law* (R.A. Duff, et al., eds., Oxford University Press 2010)

- 2009 *The Beginning of the End?*, in *The Road to Abolition?: The Future of Capital Punishment in the United States* (Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., and Austin Sarat, eds., New York University Press 2009) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2009 *Furman v. Georgia: Not an End, But a Beginning* in *Death Penalty Stories* (John H. Blume and Jordan Steiker, eds., Foundation Press 2009)
- 2008 *Darrow's Defense of Leopold and Loeb: The Seminal Sentencing of the Century*, in *Trial Stories* (Michael E. Tigar and Angela J. Davis, eds., Foundation Press 2008)
- 2007 *Tempering or Tampering? Mercy and the Administration of Criminal Justice*, in *Forgiveness, Mercy, and Clemency* (Austin Sarat and Nasser Hussain, eds., Stanford University Press 2007)
- 2005 *Capital Punishment and American Exceptionalism* in *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights* (Michael Ignatieff, ed., Princeton University Press 2005)

## Articles

- 2022 *Little Furmans Everywhere: State Constitutional Intervention and the Decline of the American Death Penalty*, forthcoming *Cornell Law Review*, 2022 (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2021 Book Review, *Let the Lord Sort Them: The Rise and Fall of the Death Penalty*, by Maurice Chammah, *Rutgers Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Book Reviews*, <https://clcjbooks.rutgers.edu/>
- 2020 *The Rise, Fall, and Afterlife of the Death Penalty in the United States*, 3 *Ann. Rev. Criminology* 299 (2020) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2019 *The American Death Penalty: Alternative Model for Ordinary Criminal Justice or Exception that Justifies the Rule?*, 22 *New Crim. L. Rev.* 359 (2019) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2018 Book Review, *End of Its Rope: How Killing the Death Penalty Can Revive Criminal Justice*, by Brandon L. Garrett, *Rutgers Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Book Reviews*, <https://clcjbooks.rutgers.edu/>
- 2017 The Tabor Lectures: *Abolishing the American Death Penalty: The Court of Public Opinion versus the U.S. Supreme Court*, 51 *Valparaiso L. Rev.* 579 (2017) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2017 *Two Cheers for Miranda*, 97 *Boston U. L. Rev.* 1197 (2017)
- 2016 *A Thematic Approach to Teaching Criminal Adjudication*, 60 *St. Louis U. L. Rev.* 463 (2016) (with Adriaan Lanni)
- 2015 *Can/Should We Purge Evil through Capital Punishment?* 9 *Crim. L. and Philos.* 367 (2015) (responding to Matthew H. Kramer, *The Ethics of*

- Capital Punishment: A Philosophical Investigation of Evil and its Consequences, Oxford University Press 2011)
- 2015 *Choosing Our Heroes: Skelly Wright and Atticus Finch*, 61 Loyola L. Rev. 125 (2015)
- 2014 Keynote: *Justice vs. Mercy in the Law of Homicide*, 47 Texas Tech L. Rev. 1 (2014)
- 2014 *Lessons for Law Reform from the American Experiment with Capital Punishment*, 87 S. Cal. L. Rev. 733 (2014) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2014 *The Death Penalty and Mass Incarceration: Convergences and Divergences*, 41 Am. J. Crim. L. 189 (2014) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2014 *Gideon's Problematic Promises*, 143 Daedalus 51 (2014)
- 2013 *Gideon at Fifty: A Problem of Political Will*, 122 Yale L. J. 2694 (2013)
- 2013 *Miller v. Alabama: Is Death (Still) Different?*, 11 Ohio St. J. Crim. L. 37 (2013) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2012 *Entrenchment and/or Destabilization? Reflections on (Another) Two Decades of Constitutional Regulation of Capital Punishment*, 30 Law & Inequality, 211 (2012) (with Jordan Steiker).
- 2010 *No More Tinkering: The American Law Institute and the Death Penalty Provisions of the Model Penal Code*, 89 Tex. L. Rev. 353 (2010) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2010 *Cost and Capital Punishment: A New Consideration Transforms an Old Debate*, 2010 U. Chi. Legal F. 117 (2010) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2010 *Capital Punishment: A Century of Discontinuous Debate*, 100 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 643 (2010) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2009 *Brandeis in Olmstead: "Our Government is the Potent, the Omnipresent Teacher,"* 79 Miss. L. J. 149 (2009)
- 2009 *The Marshall Hypothesis Revisited*, 52 How. L. J. 525 (2009)
- 2008 *Promoting Criminal Justice Reform through Legal Scholarship: Toward a Taxonomy*, 12 Berkeley J. Crim. L. 161 (2008)
- 2008 *Opening a Window a Building a Wall? The Effect of Eighth Amendment Death Penalty Law and Advocacy on Criminal Justice More Broadly*, 11 U. Pa. J. Const. L. 155 (2008) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2006 *A Tale of Two Nations: Implementation of the Death Penalty in "Executing" Versus "Symbolic" States in the United States*, 84 Tex. L. Rev. 1869 (2006) (with Jordan Steiker)



- 2006 *The Shadow of Death: The Effect of Capital Punishment on American Criminal Law and Policy*, 89 *Judicature* 250 (2006) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2005 *The Seduction of Innocence: The Attraction and Limitations of the Focus on Innocence in Capital Punishment Law and Advocacy*, 95 *J. Crim. L. & Criminology* 587 (2005) (with Jordan Steiker)
- 2005 *No, Capital Punishment Is Not Morally Required: Deterrence, Deontology, and the Death Penalty*, 58 *Stan. L. Rev.* 751 (2005)

### **Opinion Pieces**

“The Pope Changed the Catholic Church’s Position on the Death Penalty. Will the Supreme Court Follow?” (with Jordan Steiker), *Time Magazine*, Aug. 7, 2018

“Justice Kennedy: He swung left on the death penalty but declined to swing for the fences” (with Jordan Steiker), *SCOTUSblog*, July 2, 2018, <http://www.scotusblog.com/2018/07/justice-kennedy-he-swung-left-on-the-death-penalty-but-declined-to-swing-for-the-fences/>

“Rein in Texas on Executing the Intellectually Disabled” (with Jordan Steiker), *Washington Post*, Nov. 28, 2016

“The More We Confront the Death Penalty, the Less We Like It” (with Jordan Steiker), *L.A. Times*, Nov. 23, 2016

“Why Death Penalty Opponents Are Closer to Their Goal Than They Realize” (with Jordan Steiker), *New Republic*, Sept. 27, 2011

“Don’t Blame Perry for Texas’s Execution Addiction. He Doesn’t Have Much to Do With It” (with Jordan Steiker), *New Republic*, Sept. 2, 2011

“Kagan and the Legacy of Marshall,” *National Law Journal*, July 26, 2010

“Passing the Buck on Mercy,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 8, 2008

### **REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTATIONS (SINCE 2015)**

“The Juridical Regulation of Capital Punishment in the US: Promises and Pitfalls of a Failed Experiment,” *Columbia Law School Conference on Torture, Death Penalty, Imprisonment: Beccaria and His Legacies*, New York, NY (by Zoom), October 16, 2021

“The Derek Chauvin Verdict,” Panel Discussion at Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA (by Zoom), April 21, 2021

“Comparative Capital Punishment,” University of Texas School of Law book panel, Austin, TX (by Zoom), October 25, 2020 (with Jordan Steiker)

“Global Abolition of the Death Penalty: Contributors, Challenges, and Conundrums,” Taubenschlag Lecture, The Buchman Faculty of Law, University of Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv, ISRAEL, May 23, 2019

“The American Death Penalty: Alternative Model for Ordinary Criminal Justice or Exception that Justifies the Rule?,” Multi-door Criminal Justice Symposium, Bar-Ilan University Faculty of Law and University of Haifa School of Criminology, Ramat Gan and Haifa, ISRAEL, May 27-29, 2019 (with Jordan Steiker)

“The Criminalization of Poverty and the work of Harvard’s Criminal Justice Policy Program,” Annual Retreat of Federal Judges, District of Massachusetts, Chatham, MA, November 9, 2018

“Constitutional Regulation of Capital Punishment in the United States and Japan,” Ryukoku University, Kyoto, JAPAN, June 16, 2018 (also presentations at Congress House, Tokyo; the Japan Federation of Bar Association Lawyers, Tokyo; and the Osaka Bar Association, Osaka) (with Jordan Steiker)

“Mitigation and Capital Punishment,” University of Texas School of Law, Austin, TX, April 6, 2018

“The Future of the American Death Penalty,” The American University of Paris, Paris, FRANCE, March 15, 2018

“Controversies about the Past, Present, and Future of the American Death Penalty,” U.C.L.A. School of Law, Los Angeles, CA, March 9, 2018

“End of Its Rope: How Killing the Death Penalty Can Revive Criminal Justice,” University of Virginia School of Law (discussion of book by Professor Brandon L. Garrett), Charlottesville, VA, February 22, 2018

“Courting Death: Authors Meet Readers” panel, American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, November 15, 2017 (with Jordan Steiker)

“The Death Penalty in America,” League of Women Voters Justice Forum, Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, PA, November 17, 2017 (with Jordan Steiker)

“Cruel and Unusual: The Seminal Legacy of Michael Meltsner’s Work to Capital Punishment Advocacy and Scholarship,” Northeastern University School of Law, Boston, MA, October 27, 2017

“Courting Death: Authors Meet Readers” panel, Law and Society Annual Meeting, Mexico City, MEXICO, June 20, 2017 (with Jordan Steiker)

“Courting Death,” Searchlight Speaker Series at Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia, PA, June 6, 2017 (with Jordan Steiker)

“The Future of the Death Penalty Worldwide,” Conference: Comparative Capital Punishment Law, University of Texas Capital Punishment Center, Austin, TX, April 7, 2017

“Challenging the Criminalization of Poverty,” University of Ottawa Lecture Series on Research in Law, Ottawa, CANADA, March 28, 2017

“Justice and Mercy in the Judeo-Christian Tradition and American Criminal Justice,” Renaissance Weekend, Santa Fe, NM, February 18, 2017

“Courting Death,” University of Texas School of Law book panel, Austin, TX, February 10, 2017 (with Jordan Steiker)

“The Death Penalty in America,” National Constitution Center Bill of Rights Day Festival, National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, PA, December 15, 2016 (with Jordan Steiker)

“Courting Death,” Criminal Justice Policy Program Conference, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, November 17, 2016 (with Jordan Steiker)

“The Death Penalty: Historical and Doctrinal Perspectives,” Conference: The Death Penalty’s Numbered Days?, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Northwestern Pritzker School of Law, Chicago, IL, November 11, 2016 (with Jordan Steiker)

“Courting Death,” Mahindra Humanities Center Book Talk and Panel, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, October 27, 2016 (with Jordan Steiker)

“Respecting Human Dignity: Social Inequality and Mass Incarceration in the United States,” Distinguished Visiting Professorship lecture, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, CHINA, June 25, 2016

“The Rise of Mass Incarceration in the United States: Causes, Critiques, and Current Changes,” Renmin University, Beijing, CHINA, June 30, 2016

“Abolishing the American Death Penalty,” The Tabor Lectures, Valparaiso University School of Law, Valparaiso, IN, April 21, 2016 (with Jordan Steiker)

“The Future of the American Death Penalty,” Hugo Adam Bedau Memorial Lecture, Tufts University, Medford, MA, March 11, 2016

Keynote, “The Future of the Death Penalty,” Symposium: At a Crossroads: The Future of the Death Penalty, Michigan Journal of Law Reform, University of Michigan Law School, Ann Arbor, MI, February 6, 2016 (with Jordan Steiker)

“Conviction and Punishment,” Guest Lecturer, Criminal Cases: Reading Law with Literature (course by Professor Peter Gay), Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, December 9, 2015

“Reviewing the 2014 Term,” Guest Lecturer on Criminal Justice, Seminar with Justice Elena Kagan, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, September 10, 2015

“Unpremeditated: The Supreme Court and Capital Punishment,” Public Lecture, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, April 22, 2015

“Racial and Ethnic Bias in Capital Punishment Law,” Conference: Latinos and the Death Penalty, Capital Punishment Center, University of Texas School of Law, Austin TX, April 10, 2015

“Michael Brown, Ferguson, and What Is To Be Done,” Panel Discussion, Harvard Law School, March 11, 2015

# Appendix 2

## Part II: Report to the ALI Concerning Capital Punishment\*

Prepared at the Request of ALI Director Lance Liebman by Professors Carol S. Steiker (Harvard Law School) & Jordan M. Steiker (University of Texas)

### Introduction and Overview

We have been asked by Director Lance Liebman to write a paper for the Institute to help it assess the appropriate course of action with regard to Model Penal Code § 210.6 (adopted in 1962 to prescribe procedures for the imposition of capital punishment). This request stems from two recent developments. First, the Institute has already undertaken a project revisiting the MPC sentencing provisions, but that project has not included any consideration of capital punishment. Second, at the Institute's Annual Meeting in May of 2007, Roger Clark and Ellen Podgor moved "That the Institute is opposed to capital punishment." In response to the motion, an Ad Hoc Committee on the Death Penalty was convened, and in light of that committee's deliberations, Director Liebman gave us the following charge: "to review the literature, the case law, and reliable data concerning the most important contemporary issues posed by the ultimate question of retention or abolition of the death penalty and, if retained, what limitations should be placed on its use and what procedures should be required before that sentence is imposed. Another way of asking the question is this: Is fair administration of a system of capital punishment possible?" (Program Committee Recommendation Regarding the Death Penalty, Dec. 3, 2007).

The possible approaches that the Institute might take with regard to § 210.6 at the present time were identified in Dan Meltzer's memorandum on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Death Penalty (Report on ALI Consideration of Issues Relating to the Death Penalty, Oct. 2, 2007): 1) revise § 210.6, 2) call for abolition, or 3) withdraw § 210.6. Although each of these options obviously allows for various permutations, we agree that these three options mark the Institute's primary choices of action. In light of the difficulties, elaborated below, that would be raised by either the Institute's attempt to revise § 210.6 or the Institute's embrace of an unadorned call for abolition, we believe that the soundest course of action for the Institute would be withdrawal of § 210.6 with an accompanying statement to the effect that, in light of the current intractable institutional and structural obstacles to ensuring a minimally adequate system for

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administering capital punishment, the Institute calls for the rejection of capital punishment as a penal option.

This choice comes at a time of widespread reflection about American capital punishment. On the one hand, popular political support for the death penalty appears to remain relatively high, with opinion polls reporting stable majorities (about 70%) embracing the death penalty on a question that asks “Are you in favor of the death penalty for a person convicted of murder?” Thirty-six states presently authorize the death penalty (as well as the federal government), twenty-four of those states have at least ten inmates on death row, and nineteen of those states have conducted at least ten executions over the past forty years. At the same time, however, use of the death penalty (in terms of executions and especially death sentences) has declined significantly in recent years. Nationwide executions reached a modern-era (post-1976) high of 98 in 1998; the past three years have seen significantly lower totals – 53 (2006), 42 (2007), and 34 (2008 – as of Nov. 20). Nationwide death sentences have dropped even more precipitously, from modern-era highs of around 300 in the mid-1990s (315 (1994), 326 (1995), 323 (1996)), to modern-era lows in each of the past four years (140 (2004), 138 (2005), 115 (2006), 110 (2007)). In addition, executions during the modern era have been heavily concentrated in a small number of states, with five states (Texas (422), Virginia (102), Oklahoma (88), Florida (66) and Missouri (66)) accounting for about two-thirds of the executions nationwide (744/1133). Several states, including California and Pennsylvania, have large death-row populations (CA = 667, PA = 228) but very few executions in the modern era (CA = 13, PA = 3). This snapshot captures both the continuing political support for the death penalty as an available punishment but also significant ambivalence about its use in practice. Although different in its particulars, this snapshot shares some similarities to the state of the American death penalty almost a half century ago when the Institute last addressed capital punishment.

The Institute’s initial involvement in American capital punishment resulted in its promulgation of § 210.6 of the Model Penal Code in 1962. As the Meltzer memorandum recounts, the drafters of the MPC considered the problems plaguing the then-prevailing death penalty practices. The provision sought to ameliorate concerns about the arbitrary administration of the punishment and the absence of meaningful guidance in state capital statutes. The MPC provision was essentially ignored until the Supreme Court invalidated all existing capital statutes in *Furman v. Georgia*<sup>1</sup> in 1972. *Furman* raised concerns about the arbitrary and discriminatory administration of the death penalty. These concerns stemmed from the interplay of extremely broad death eligibility in state schemes, the fact of its rare imposition, and the absence of any standards guiding charging or

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1. 408 U.S. 238 (1972).

sentencer discretion. After *Furman*, states sought to resuscitate their capital statutes by revising them to address the concerns raised in *Furman*; many of the states turned to § 210.6 as a template for their revised statutes, hoping in part that the prestige of the Institute would help to validate these new efforts. In the 1976 cases addressing five of the revised statutes, state advocates drew particular attention to the fact that many of their provisions were modeled on § 210.6. The Court in turn relied on the expertise of the Institute – particularly its view that guided discretion could improve capital decisionmaking – when it upheld the Georgia, Florida, and Texas statutes.<sup>2</sup> Those statutes, and the decisions upholding them, provided the blueprint for the modern American death penalty.

The stance that the Court took in 1976 was provisional; it then adopted a role of continuing constitutional oversight of the administration of capital punishment. Each year the Court has granted review in a substantial number of capital cases, and the Court has continually adjusted its regulatory approach to prevailing capital practices. It is clear that the Court's attempt to regulate capital punishment – largely on the model provided by the MPC – has been unsuccessful on its own terms. The guided discretion experiment has not solved the problems of arbitrariness and discrimination that figured so prominently in *Furman*; nor has the Court's regulation proven able to ensure the reliability of verdicts or the protection of fundamental due process in capital cases. An abundant literature, reviewed below, reveals the continuing influence of arbitrary factors (such as geography and quality of representation) and invidious factors (most prominently race) on the distribution of capital verdicts. Most disturbing is the evidence of numerous wrongful convictions of the innocent, many of whom were only fortuitously exonerated before execution, and the continuing concern about the likelihood of similar miscarriages of justice in the future. These failures of constitutional regulation are due in part to the inherent difficulty and complexity of the task of rationalizing the death penalty decision, given the competing demands of even-handed administration and individualized consideration. Moreover, such a difficult task is compounded by deeply

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2. *Gregg v. Georgia*, 428 U.S. 153, 193 (1976) (opinion of Stewart, Powell, and Stevens, JJ.) (“While some have suggested that standards to guide a capital jury’s sentencing deliberations are impossible to formulate, the fact is that such standards have been developed. When the drafters of the Model Penal Code faced this problem, they concluded ‘that it is within the realm of possibility to point to the main circumstances of aggravation and of mitigation that should be weighed *and weighed against each other* when they are presented in a concrete case.’”) (emphasis in original) (quoting ALI, Model Penal Code § 201.6, Comment 3, p. 71 (Tent. Draft No. 9, 1959)) (footnote omitted) (the citation to “§ 2.01.6” rather than to “§ 2.10.6” reflects the change in numbering from the 1959 draft to the 1962 Code); *Proffitt v. Florida*, 428 U.S. 242, 247-48 (1976) (opinion of Stewart, Powell, and Stevens, JJ.) (describing Florida statute as “patterned in large part on the Model Penal Code”); *Jurek v. Texas*, 428 U.S. 262, 270 (1976) (opinion of Stewart, Powell, and Stevens, JJ.) (citing Model Penal Code to support its conclusion that the narrowing of capital murder in the Texas statute serves much the same purpose as the use of aggravating factors in Florida and Georgia).

rooted institutional and structural obstacles to an adequate capital justice process. Such obstacles include the intense politicization of the capital justice process, the inadequacy of resources for capital defense services, and the lack of meaningful independent federal review of capital convictions.

In many legal contexts, the identification of problems in the administration of justice and obstacles to reform would counsel in favor of the Institute's undertaking a reform project in order to promote needed improvement. The administration of capital punishment, however, presents a context highly unfavorable for a successful law reform project, for several related reasons.

First, numerous other organizations have already undertaken to study the administration of capital punishment, both at the state and the national level. These studies have generated an enormous amount of raw data and a large body of proposed reforms (about which there is a substantial degree of agreement from a variety of sources). A large number of diverse states have undertaken systematic self-studies of the administration of their systems of capital punishment in the recent past. For example, in 2001, Governor George Ryan of Illinois appointed a blue-ribbon, bi-partisan commission to conduct a comprehensive study his state's administration of capital punishment after 13 exonerations from Illinois' death row.<sup>3</sup> In 2004, a task force of the New Mexico State Bar undertook a comprehensive study of capital punishment in that state.<sup>4</sup> The legislatures of a number of other states have also undertaken systematic studies of their death penalty systems, including Connecticut in 2001,<sup>5</sup> North Carolina in 2005,<sup>6</sup> New Jersey in 2006,<sup>7</sup> Tennessee in 2007,<sup>8</sup> and Maryland in 2008.<sup>9</sup> In addition to these comprehensive studies, virtually every death penalty state has undertaken one or more smaller investigations into various aspects of their capital justice system (such as cost, racial disparities, forensic evidence processing, etc.).

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3. See <http://www.idoc.state.il.us/ccp/index.html> for a copy of the Executive Order, a list of Commission Members, and the Commission's final report. Two years later, Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts (an abolitionist state) took a similar step in appointing a blue-ribbon commission; the Massachusetts Commission was charged with determining how to create a "fool proof" death penalty statute that would avoid the erroneous conviction and execution of murderers. See [http://www.cjpc.org/dp\\_govs\\_commission.htm](http://www.cjpc.org/dp_govs_commission.htm).

4. See <http://www.nmbar.org/Attorneys/lawpubs/TskfrcDthPnltyrpt.pdf> for a copy of the Task Force's final report.

5. See [http://www.ct.gov/.../commission\\_on\\_the\\_death\\_penalty\\_final\\_report\\_2003.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/.../commission_on_the_death_penalty_final_report_2003.pdf) for a copy of the Connecticut Commission's final report.

6. See <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/1557> (20 members of the North Carolina House of Representatives appointed to undertake study the administration of the death penalty).

7. See [http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/committees/njdeath\\_penalty.asp](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/committees/njdeath_penalty.asp). New Jersey abolished the death penalty in 2007.

8. See <http://www.thejusticeproject.org/press/tn-death-penalty-study-bill-passed/> (16 member expert committee appointed in Tennessee).

9. See <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/2336> (commission appointed to study racial, socio-economic, and geographical disparities, the execution of the innocent, and cost issues relating to the death penalty in Maryland).



The most wide-ranging studies to date are those conducted by the American Bar Association in conjunction with its call for a nationwide moratorium on capital punishment in 1997. In the wake of the adoption of its moratorium resolution, the ABA developed a publication entitled *Death Without Justice: A Guide for Examining the Administration of the Death Penalty in the United States*, which was intended to serve as "Protocols" for jurisdictions undertaking reviews of death penalty-related laws and processes. The ABA, as part of its Death Penalty Moratorium Implementation Project, has recently completed a three-year study of eight states to determine the extent to which their capital punishment systems achieve fairness and provide due process.<sup>10</sup> A review of the ABA's research and the state self-studies together strongly suggests that the death penalty is not an area in which the Institute can measurably contribute by conducting new research or compiling or explicating existing research.

Second, there is also reason to be skeptical that the Institute will be able to promote needed death penalty reform by adding its voice, with the expertise and prestige that is associated with it, to influence political actors. Capital punishment has remained an issue strongly resistant to reform through the political process in most jurisdictions. Consider first the reforms contained in § 210.6 itself. Although adopted by the Institute in 1962, § 210.6 was ignored in the political realm for a decade, until the Supreme Court constitutionally invalidated capital punishment in 1972, at which point § 210.6 was pressed into service by state legislatures in order to revive the moribund penalty. The ABA's *Guidelines for the Appointment and Performance of Defense Counsel in Death Penalty Cases*, originally adopted in 1989 and revised in 2003, have likewise failed to succeed in the political realm; indeed, the ABA's Death Penalty Moratorium Implementation Project found in 2007 that not a single one of the eight states that it studied were fully in compliance with any aspect of the ABA *Guidelines* studied. (See discussion in section on "Inadequacy of Resources, *infra*.) Perhaps most telling is the view of Professor Joseph Hoffman, someone who has devoted enormous time and energy to death penalty reform, spearheading death penalty reform efforts in both Illinois and Indiana and serving as Co-Chair and Reporter for the Massachusetts Governor's Council on Capital Punishment. Hoffman served as a member of an advisory group to discuss an earlier draft of this paper, and he strongly expressed the view that seeking reform of capital punishment in the political realm is futile. This is a striking position to take by one who is not morally opposed to the death penalty and who has worked on numerous reform projects. But Hoffman cited as grounds for his change of heart the example of Illinois, in which there were confirmed wrongful convictions in capital cases, a sympathetic Governor, and a bi-partisan reform commission, but still strong resistance in the state

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10. See <http://www.abanet.org/moratorium/> for the full reports of the ABA Moratorium Implementation Project.

legislature to reforms specifically targeted at capital punishment. In short, serious concerns about efficacy in the political realm militate against the undertaking of a new reform effort by the Institute.

Moreover, some of the structural problems in the administration of capital punishment are not the sort of problems that the Institute can address with its legal expertise. While standards for defense counsel, for example, might be considered within the purview of the Institute's expertise, the problem of the intense politicization of the capital process – arising from the decentralization of criminal justice authority within states, the political accountability of many of the key actors in the capital justice system, and the sensationalism of death cases in the media – is a problem largely beyond the reach of legal reform.

Finally, were the Institute to take on a death penalty reform project despite the likelihood of ineffectiveness in the political realm and the fact that some of the underlying problems are not amenable to legal reform, it would run the risk not merely of failing to improve the death penalty, but also of helping to entrench or legitimate it. The undertaking of a reform project, despite its impetus in the flaws of current practice, might be understood as an indication that “the fundamentals” of the capital justice process are sound, or at least remediable. If the Institute upon reflection concludes, as this report suggests, that the administration of capital punishment is beset by problems that cannot be remedied by even an ambitious reform project, the Institute should say so, rather than invest its own time and resources and the hopes of reformers, in a project that will not succeed but may delay the recognition of failure.

We also recommend against the Institute's adoption of the Clark-Podgor motion declaring “[t]hat the Institute is opposed to capital punishment.” As this report reflects, our study of capital punishment focuses on its contemporary administration in the United States and the prevailing obstacles to institutional reform. We did not understand our charge from the Institute to encompass review of moral and political arguments supporting or opposing the death penalty as a legitimate form of punishment. Obviously there is deep disagreement along these dimensions regarding the basic justice of the death penalty. Some supporters view the death penalty as retributively justified (or indeed required). Other supporters maintain that the death penalty deters violent offenses and should be embraced on utilitarian grounds, especially in light of some recent empirical work purporting to establish its deterrent value.<sup>11</sup> Opponents generally reject the retributive argument and insist that capital punishment violates human dignity or vests an intolerable power in the State over the individual. Some opponents reject the empirical claims of deterrence and advance contrary claims of a

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11. See generally Robert Weisberg, *The Death Penalty Meets Social Science: Deterrence and Jury Behavior Under New Scrutiny*, 1 Ann. Rev. L. & Soc. Sci. 151 (2005) (reviewing recent empirical studies and their critics).

“brutalization effect” in which executions actually reduce inhibitions toward violent crime.

Resolution of these competing claims falls outside the expertise of the Institute. The Institute is well-positioned to evaluate the contemporary administration and legal regulation of the death penalty. Moreover, the Institute is well-suited to evaluate the success, or lack thereof, of the MPC death penalty provisions in light of their subsequent adoption (in whole or part) by many jurisdictions. If, in its review of the prevailing system and of the prospects for securing a minimally adequate capital process, the Institute were to conclude that the death penalty should not be a penal option, the Institute should frame its conclusion to reflect the basis for its judgment. Endorsement of the Clark-Podgor motion might well be understood to reflect a moral or philosophical judgment rather than a judgment about the inadequacy of prevailing or prospective institutional arrangements to satisfy basic requirements of fairness and accuracy. That perception of the Institute’s position would be inconsistent with the focus of this report (and the questions propounded by the Program Committee Recommendation Regarding the Death Penalty) and could possibly undermine the authority of the Institute’s voice on this issue.

The remaining question for the Institute is whether to withdraw § 210.6, and if so, whether to include an accompanying statement regarding the withdrawal. The case for withdrawal is compelling and reflects a consensus among the Institute’s members who have spoken to the issue thus far. At the outset, it should be noted that several provisions in § 210.6 have been rendered unconstitutional by rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court in the years since 1962. For example, section 210.6’s failure to require a jury determination of death eligibility conflicts with the Supreme Court’s recognition of a Sixth Amendment right to such a determination;<sup>12</sup> one of § 210.6’s aggravating factors (“the murder was especially heinous, atrocious or cruel, manifesting exceptional depravity”) has been deemed to be impermissibly vague;<sup>13</sup> and section 210.6’s failure to identify mental retardation as a basis for exemption from capital punishment violates the Court’s recent Eighth Amendment proportionality jurisprudence.<sup>14</sup> These specific defects could be corrected, but more fundamentally § 210.6 is simply inadequate to address the endemic flaws of the current system. Section 210.6, which in many respects provided the template for contemporary state capital schemes, represents a failed attempt to rationalize the administration of the death penalty and, for the reasons we discuss in greater detail below, its adoption rested on the false assumption that carefully-worded guidance to capital sentencers would meaningfully limit arbitrariness and discrimination in the administration of the American death penalty.

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12. *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584 (2002).

13. *Godfrey v. Georgia*, 446 U.S. 420 (1980).

14. *Atkins v. Virginia*, 536 U.S. 304 (2002).

Given the prevailing problems in the administration of the death penalty and the discouraging prospects for successful reform, we recommend that the Institute issue a statement accompanying the withdrawal of § 210.6 calling for the rejection of capital punishment as a penal option under current circumstances (“In light of the current intractable institutional and structural obstacles to ensuring a minimally adequate system for administering capital punishment, the Institute calls for the rejection of capital punishment as a penal option.”). Such a statement would reflect the view that the death penalty should not be imposed unless its administration can satisfy a reasonable threshold of fairness and reliability.

Mere withdrawal of § 210.6, without such an accompanying statement, would pose two problems. First, the absence of any explanation might suggest that the Institute is simply acknowledging specific defects in the section, or that the Institute believes that the problems afflicting the administration of the death penalty are discrete and amenable to adequate amelioration. Second, and more importantly, the Institute’s role is to speak directly and forthrightly on policy questions within its expertise. If the Institute is persuaded that the death penalty cannot be fairly and reliably administered in the current structural and institutional setting, it should say so.

Of course, many of the problems in the capital justice system exist to some degree in the broader criminal justice system as well. Why should these problems call for the rejection of the death penalty as a penal option if such problems could not justify elimination of criminal punishment altogether? Four considerations suggest the distinctiveness of the capital context. First, unlike incarceration, capital punishment is not an essential part of a functioning criminal justice system (as reflected by its absence in many localities, states and, indeed, many countries). While many of the same problems that afflict the prevailing capital system are also present in the non-capital system, the deficiencies of the non-capital system must be tolerated because the social purposes served by incarceration cannot otherwise be achieved. Second, many of the problems undermining the fair and accurate administration of criminal punishment are more pronounced in capital cases. For example, the distorting pressures of politicization exist in both capital and non-capital cases, but the high visibility and symbolic salience of the death penalty heightens these pressures in capital litigation. The inadequacy of resources and the absence of meaningful supervision of counsel are also prevalent throughout the criminal justice system, but these problems appear with greater regularity and severity on the capital side as a consequence the special training, experience, and funding necessary to ensure even minimally competent capital representation. Third, the irrevocability of the death penalty counsels against accepting a system with a demonstrably significant rate of error. Evidence suggests a higher rate of erroneous convictions in capital versus non-capital cases, and there is little reason to believe that the problem of wrongful convictions and executions

will be solved in the foreseeable future. Fourth, deficiencies within the capital system impose significant and disproportionate costs on the broader legitimacy of the criminal justice system. In light of the high visibility and high political salience of capital cases, the arbitrary or inaccurate imposition of the death penalty undermines public confidence in our institutions and generates a distinctive and more damaging type of disrepute than similar problems in non-capital cases.

What follows below is a more thorough account of the existing problems in capital practice, the various efforts to address those problems, and the prospects for meaningful reform. Part I evaluates the course of constitutional regulation over the past three decades. The remaining sections examine the underlying problems and structural barriers that have undermined regulatory efforts (Part II: The Politicization of Capital Punishment; Part III: Race Discrimination; Part IV: Juror Confusion; Part V: The Inadequacy of Resources, Especially Defense Counsel Services, in Capital Cases; Part VI: Erroneous Conviction of the Innocent; Part VII: Inadequate Enforcement of Federal Rights; Part VIII: The Death Penalty's Effect on the Administration of Criminal Justice). Of course, it is possible to improve discrete aspects of the capital justice process through incremental reform. But achieving the degree of improvement that would be necessary to secure a minimally adequate system for administering capital punishment in the United States today faces insurmountable institutional and structural obstacles. Those obstacles counsel against the Institute's undertaking a reform project and in favor of the Institute's recognition of the inappropriateness of retaining capital punishment as a penal option.

#### I. The Inadequacies of Constitutional Regulation

The Supreme Court's constitutional regulation of capital punishment, which commenced in earnest with the Court's temporary invalidation of capital punishment in *Furman v. Georgia* in 1972<sup>15</sup> and its reauthorization of capital punishment in *Gregg v. Georgia* in 1976,<sup>16</sup> has produced some significant advances, both substantively and procedurally, in the administration of the death penalty. Indeed, most of these advances track the requirements of § 210.6, which served as a template for many states in reforming their capital schemes to avoid constitutional invalidation. For example, like the MPC, most states try to guide capital sentencing discretion through consideration of "aggravating" and "mitigating" factors in response to the *Furman* Court's rejection of "standardless" capital sentencing discretion and the *Gregg* Court's approval of "guided discretion." Such guidance seeks to avoid the arbitrariness that was guaranteed by the pre-

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15. 408 U.S. 238.

16. 428 U.S. 153. See also *Gregg's* four accompanying cases: *Proffitt*, 428 U.S. 242; *Jurek*, 428 U.S. 262; *Woodson v. North Carolina*, 428 U.S. 280 (1976); and *Roberts v. Louisiana*, 428 U.S. 325 (1976).

*Furman* practice of instructing juries merely that the sentencing decision was to be made according to their conscience, or in their sole discretion, without any further elaboration. By invalidating the death penalty for rape in 1977<sup>17</sup> and extending that invalidation to the crime of child rape this past Term,<sup>18</sup> the Supreme Court, again like the MPC, has limited capital punishment to the crime of murder,<sup>19</sup> in comparison to the pre-*Furman* world in which death sentences for rape, armed robbery, burglary and kidnapping were authorized and more than occasionally imposed. The Court recently has categorically excluded juveniles and offenders with mental retardation from the ambit of the death penalty.<sup>20</sup> Although the Court has never held that bifurcated proceedings (separate guilt and sentencing phases) are constitutionally required,<sup>21</sup> post-*Furman* statutes have made bifurcation the norm, and it would likely be held to be a constitutional essential today, should the issue ever arise.

Despite these genuine improvements to the administration of capital punishment, constitutional regulation has proven inadequate to address the concerns about arbitrariness, discrimination, and error in the capital justice process that led to the Court's intervention in the first place. At its worst, constitutional regulation is part of the problem. When the Court requires irreconcilable procedures, its own conflicting doctrines doom its efforts to failure. Such conflicts have led several Justices to reject the Court's regulatory efforts as unsustainable. In many more instances, the Court's doctrine, though it may recognize serious threats to fairness in the process or recognize important rights, fails to provide adequate mechanisms to address the threats or vindicate the rights. Some of these inadequacies have led additional Justices to defect in various ways from the Court's death penalty doctrine. Finally, the existence of an extensive web of constitutional regulation with minimal regulatory effect stands in the way of *non*-constitutional legislative reform of the administration of capital punishment – not only because such reform is generally extremely unpopular politically, but also because political actors and the general public assume that constitutional oversight by the federal courts is the proper locus for ensuring the fairness in capital sentencing and that the lengthy appeals process in capital cases demonstrates that the courts are doing their job (indeed, maybe even *over*-doing their job, considering how long cases take to get through the

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17. *Coker v. Georgia*, 433 U.S. 584 (1977).

18. *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, 128 S. Ct. 2651 (2008).

19. The Court limited its holding to crimes against persons, and put to one side crimes against the state such as treason or terrorism. *See id.* at 2659.

20. *Atkins v. Virginia*, 536 U.S. 304 (2002) (offenders with mental retardation); *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005) (juvenile offenders). The MPC categorically excludes juvenile offenders, and addresses mental retardation by requiring a life sentence when the court is satisfied that “the defendant’s physical or mental condition calls for leniency.” § 211.6(1)(e).

21. *McGautha v. California*, 402 U.S. 183 (1971). The MPC requires bifurcated proceedings. § 210.6(2).

entire review process). What follows is a discussion of the four most serious inadequacies in the constitutional regulation of capital punishment and their implications for reform efforts.

1. *The central tension between guided discretion and individualized sentencing.*—The two central pillars of the Court’s Eighth Amendment regulation of capital punishment are the twin requirements that capital sentencers be afforded sufficient guidance in the exercise of their discretion and that sentencers at the same time not be restricted in any way in their consideration of potentially mitigating evidence. The first requirement led the Court to reject aggravating factors that rendered capital defendants death eligible but failed to furnish sufficient guidance to sentencers – most notably, factors similar to MPC § 210.6(3)(h): “The murder was especially heinous, atrocious or cruel, manifesting exceptional depravity.” The Court rejected such vague factors as insufficient either to narrow the class of those eligible for capital punishment or to channel the exercise of sentencing discretion.<sup>22</sup> The second requirement led the Court to reject statutory schemes that limited sentencers’ consideration of any potentially mitigating evidence, either by restricting mitigating circumstances to a statutory list,<sup>23</sup> or by excluding full consideration of some potentially relevant mitigating evidence.<sup>24</sup>

From the start, the tension between the demands of consistency and individualization were apparent. As early as a year prior to *Furman*, the lawyers who litigated *Furman* and *Gregg* argued that unregulated mercy was essentially equivalent to unregulated selection: “‘Kill him if you want’ and ‘Kill him, but you may spare him if you want’ mean the same thing in any man’s language.”<sup>25</sup> After more than a decade of attempting to administer both requirements, several members of the Court with widely divergent perspectives came to see the incoherence of the foundations of their Eighth Amendment doctrine. In 1990, Justice Scalia argued that the second doctrine – or “counterdoctrine” – of individualized sentencing “exploded whatever coherence the notion of ‘guided discretion’ once had.”<sup>26</sup> Justice Scalia rejected the view that the two doctrines were merely in tension rather than flatly contradictory: “To acknowledge that ‘there perhaps is an inherent tension’ [between the two doctrines] is rather like saying that there was perhaps an inherent tension between the Allies and the Axis Powers in World War II. And to refer to the two lines as pursuing ‘twin objectives’ is rather like referring to the twin objectives of good and evil. They cannot be

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22. See, e.g., *Godfrey v. Georgia*, 446 U.S. 420 (1980); *Maynard v. Cartwright*, 486 U.S. 356 (1988).

23. See *Lockett v. Ohio*, 438 U.S. 586 (1978).

24. See *Penry v. Lynaugh*, 492 U.S. 303 (1989).

25. See Brief Amici Curiae of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., and the National Office for the Rights of the Indigent at 69, *McGautha v. California*, 402 U.S. 183 (1971) (No. 71-203).

26. *Walton v. Arizona*, 497 U.S. 639, 661 (1990) (Scalia, J., concurring)

reconciled.”<sup>27</sup> As a result, Justice Scalia (later joined by Justice Thomas), has chosen between the two commands and rejected the requirement of individualized sentencing as without constitutional pedigree: “Accordingly, I will not, in this case or in the future, vote to uphold an Eighth Amendment claim that the sentencer’s discretion has been unlawfully restricted.”<sup>28</sup>

Four years later, Justice Blackmun came to same recognition of the essential conflict between the doctrines, but reached a different conclusion. Justice Blackmun found himself at a loss to imagine any sort of reform that could mediate between the two conflicting commands: “Any statute or procedure that could effectively eliminate arbitrariness from the administration of death would also restrict the sentencer’s discretion to such an extent that the sentencer would be unable to give full consideration to the unique characteristics of each defendant and the circumstances of the offense. By the same token, any statute or procedure that would provide the sentencer with sufficient discretion to consider fully and act upon the unique circumstances of each defendant would ‘thro[w] open the back door to arbitrary and irrational sentencing.’”<sup>29</sup> Unlike Justices Scalia and Thomas, however, Justice Blackmun did not resolve to jettison either constitutional command – not merely because of the demands of *stare decisis*, but “because there is a heightened need for both in the administration of death.”<sup>30</sup> Consequently, Justice Blackmun concluded that “the proper course when faced with irreconcilable constitutional commands is not to ignore one or the other, nor to pretend that the dilemma does not exist, but to admit the futility of the effort to harmonize them. This means accepting the fact that the death penalty cannot be administered in accord with our Constitution.”<sup>31</sup>

One Justice’s response to the conflict between the need for guidance and the need for individualization was to call for limiting eligibility for capital punishment to a very small group of the worst of the worst – “the tip of the pyramid” of all murderers, in the words of Justice Stevens.<sup>32</sup> If unguided mercy reprieves some from this group, there will still be arbitrariness in choosing among the death eligible, but it will operate on a much smaller scale, and with greater assurance that those who make it to the “tip” belong in the group of the death eligible. However, even if it were agreed that limiting arbitrariness to a smaller arena is sufficient to mediate the conflict between guidance and discretion, this solution is neither constitutionally prescribed nor politically feasible. The Court’s “narrowing” requirement is formal rather than quantitative; there is no requirement that

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27. *Id.* at 664 (citations omitted).

28. *Id.* at 673.

29. *Callins v. Collins*, 510 U.S. 1141, 1155 (1994) (Blackmun, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari) (citation omitted).

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.* at 1157.

32. *See Walton*, 497 U.S. at 716-18 (Stevens, J., dissenting).



any state restrict the ambit of the death penalty to a group of any particular size or with any particular aggravating attributes. And in the absence of a constitutional command, the scope of most capital statutes remains extraordinarily broad. One study, for example, of the Georgia statute upheld in *Gregg* as a model of guided discretion, found that 86% of all persons convicted of murder in Georgia over a five-year period after the adoption of Georgia's new statute were death-eligible under that scheme,<sup>33</sup> and that over 90% of persons sentenced to death before *Furman* would also be deemed death-eligible under the post-*Furman* Georgia statute.<sup>34</sup> The widespread authorization of the death penalty for felony murder, murder for pecuniary gain, and murders that could be described as "cold-blooded," "pitiless," and the like<sup>35</sup> have ensured a wide scope of death eligibility, and capital statutes have tended to grow rather than shrink over time, for reasons that we discuss in greater detail below. (See section on "Politicization.")

The conflict between guidance and individualization thus has been resolved by the Court not by Justice Stevens' suggestion of strict narrowing, but rather by reducing the requirement of guidance to a mere formality. States must craft statutes that narrow the class of the death eligible to some subset – however large and however defined – of the entire class of those convicted of the crime of murder. In contrast, the Court has enforced the requirement of individualization with greater zeal and demandingness. Consequently, the structure of capital sentencing today is surprisingly similar to the pre-*Furman* structure (bifurcation aside). The sentencer must determine whether the defendant is death eligible – today not merely by conviction of a capital offense but also by the additional finding of an aggravating factor. These factors can be numerous, broad in scope, and still quite vague; indeed, the Court has held that the aggravator can duplicate an element of the offense of capital murder (in which case the aggravator adds nothing to the conviction).<sup>36</sup> After this fairly undemanding finding, the inquiry opens up into pre-*Furman* sentencing according to conscience: the sentencer is asked whether any mitigating circumstances of any type, statutory or non-statutory, call for a sentence less than death. This sentencing structure, which dominates the post-*Furman* world, is not accidental, nor is it the product of deliberate undermining of constitutional norms by states; rather, it is the *product* of constitutional regulation and thus fairly impervious to all but constitutional reform.

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33. David C. Baldus, George Woodworth & Charles A. Pulaski, Jr., *Equal Justice and the Death Penalty: A Legal and Empirical Analysis* 268 n.31(1990).

34. *Id.* at 102.

35. Although the Court initially invalidated vague aggravators like "heinous, atrocious or cruel," it later permitted judicially imposed "narrowing constructions" of such aggravators to save them from unconstitutionality. For example, in *Arave v. Creech*, 507 U.S. 463 (1993), the Court upheld Idaho's aggravator of "utter disregard for human life" by a narrowing construction that asked sentencers whether the defendant acted as a "cold-blooded, pitiless slayer."

36. *See* *Lowenfield v. Phelps*, 484 U.S. 231 (1988).

We share Justice Blackmun's skepticism about the possibility of adequate constitutional mediation of the needs for heightened guidance and individualization in the capital context. As for Justice Steven's suggestion of the possibility of sharply narrowing the scope of capital punishment, Justice Harlan said it best in 1971, in explaining the Court's rejection of challenges to standardless capital sentencing under the Due Process clause:

To identify before the fact those characteristics of criminal homicides and their perpetrators which call for the death penalty, and to express these characteristics in language which can be fairly understood and applied by the sentencing authority, appear to be tasks which are beyond present human ability. . . . For a court to attempt to catalog the appropriate factors in this elusive area could inhibit rather than expand the scope of consideration, for no list of circumstances would ever be really complete. The infinite variety of cases and facets to each case would make general standards either meaningless 'boiler-plate' or a statement of the obvious that no jury would need.<sup>37</sup>

As for Justice Scalia's suggestion of abandoning the individualization requirement as a constitutional essential, we think the 1976 *Woodson* plurality explanation for why individualization is required remains compelling:

A process that accords no significance to relevant facets of the character and record of the individual offender or the circumstances of the particular offense excludes from consideration in fixing the ultimate punishment of death the possibility of compassionate or mitigating factors stemming from the diverse frailties of humankind. It treats all persons convicted of a designated offense not as uniquely individual human beings, but as members of a faceless, undifferentiated mass to be subjected to the blind infliction of the penalty of death.<sup>38</sup>

In the absence of a constitutional solution, states (and Congress) will continue to operate capital sentencing schemes that fail to adequately address the concerns about arbitrariness and discrimination that led to constitutional intervention in the first instance.

2. *Racial disparities and constitutional remedies.*—The failure of constitutionally mandated guided discretion to offer much in the way of guidance might be less worrisome if there were other constitutional avenues to address discriminatory outcomes. After all, the challenge to standardless capital sentencing that led to the constitutional requirement of guided discretion was premised in large part on the concern that the absence of guidance gave too much play to racial discrimination. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the organization that spearheaded the constitutional litigation

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37. *McGautha*, 402 U.S. at 204, 208.

38. 428 U.S., 304 (plurality opinion of Stewart, Stevens, and Powell, JJ.).

challenging the death penalty that culminated in *Furman* and *Gregg*, was also involved in litigation under the Equal Protection clause directly challenging racial disparities in the distribution of death sentences. For the first few decades of constitutional regulation of capital punishment, however, the Court avoided this issue, deciding cases that raised it on entirely non-racial grounds.<sup>39</sup> Finally, in 1987, the Court took up the issue directly in *McCleskey v. Kemp*.<sup>40</sup>

*McCleskey* involved a constitutional challenge to the imposition of the death penalty based on an empirical study conducted by Professor David Baldus and his associates (the Baldus study) using multiple regression statistical analysis to study the effect of the race of defendants and the race of victims in capital sentencing proceedings in Georgia. The study examined over 2,000 murder cases that occurred in Georgia during the 1970's. The researchers used a number of different models that took account of numerous variables that could have explained the apparent racial disparities on nonracial grounds. The study found a very strong race-of-the-victim effect and a weaker race-of-the-defendant effect: after controlling for the nonracial variables, the study concluded that defendants charged with killing white victims were 4.3 times as likely to receive a death sentence as defendants charged with killing blacks, and that black defendants who killed white victims had the greatest likelihood of receiving the death penalty.

The Court rejected McCleskey's challenge to his death sentence on both Equal Protection and Eighth Amendment grounds. The Court assumed for the sake of argument the validity of the Baldus study's statistical findings, but held that proof of racial disparities in the distribution of capital sentencing outcomes in a geographic area in the past was insufficient to prove racial discrimination in a later case. Proof of unconstitutional discrimination, held the Court, requires proof of discriminatory *purpose* on the part of the decisionmakers in a particular case. Moreover, in light of the importance of discretion in the administration of criminal justice, proof of such purpose must be "exceptionally clear."<sup>41</sup> In light of this heavy burden, the Court found the Baldus study's results "clearly insufficient" to prove discriminatory purpose under the Equal Protection clause.<sup>42</sup> As for the Eighth Amendment challenge, the Court held that the "discrepancy indicated by the Baldus study is a far cry from the major systemic defects identified in *Furman*."<sup>43</sup> The Court concluded that the "risk of racial bias" demonstrated by the Baldus study was not "constitutionally significant."<sup>44</sup>

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39. See, e.g., *Coker v. Georgia*, 433 U.S. 584 (1977); *Maxwell v. Bishop*, 398 U.S. 362 (1970).

40. 481 U.S. 279 (1987).

41. *Id.* at 297.

42. *Id.*

43. *Id.* at 313.

44. *Id.*

In part, the Court's rejection of McCleskey's claim was informed by its concern that there might be no plausible constitutional remedy short of abolition: "McCleskey's claim . . . would extend to all capital cases in Georgia, at least where the victim was white and the defendant is black."<sup>45</sup> (We discuss further the difficult problem of remedies for racial discrimination below in the section on "Race Discrimination.") But the Court's requirement of exceptionally clear proof of discriminatory purpose on the part of a particular sentencer makes constitutional challenges to intentional discrimination essentially impossible to mount. Not surprisingly, there have been no successful constitutional challenges to racial disparities in capital sentencing in the more than two decades since *McCleskey*, despite continued findings by many researchers in many different jurisdictions of strong racial effects. By rendering racial disparities in sentencing outcomes constitutionally irrelevant in the absence of more direct proof of discrimination, the Court has dispatched the problem of racial discrimination in capital sentencing from the constitutional sphere to the legislative one, where it has not fared well. (See "Race Discrimination," below.) Notably, Justice Powell, the author of the 5-4 majority opinion in *McCleskey*, repudiated his own vote only a few years later, when a biographer asked him upon his retirement if there were any votes that he would change, and he replied, "Yes, *McCleskey v. Kemp*."<sup>46</sup>

In rejecting McCleskey's Eighth Amendment claim that the Baldus study demonstrated an unacceptable "risk" of discrimination, the Court relied in part on other "safeguards designed to minimize racial bias in the process."<sup>47</sup> Primary among these safeguards is the Court's *Batson* doctrine. In *Batson v. Kentucky*<sup>48</sup> – decided just one year prior to *McCleskey* – the Court eased the requirement for proving intentional discrimination in the exercise of peremptory strikes by shifting the burden to the prosecution to provide race neutral explanations for strikes when the nature or pattern of strikes in an individual case gave rise to a *prima facie* inference of discriminatory intent. *Batson* did in fact permit the litigation of many more claims of discrimination in the use of peremptory strikes than the earlier, more demanding *Swain* doctrine,<sup>49</sup> and the Court has been more vigorous in overseeing the enforcement of the *Batson* right in capital cases in recent years.<sup>50</sup>

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45. *Id.* at 293.

46. David Von Drehle, *Retired Justice Changes Stand on Death Penalty: Powell Is Said to Favor Ending Executions*, Wash. Post, June 10, 1994 (based on interview with John C. Jeffries, Jr., Justice Powell's official biographer).

47. *McCleskey*, 481 U.S. at 313.

48. 476 U.S. 79 (1986).

49. See *Swain v. Alabama*, 380 U.S. 202 (1965).

50. See *Snyder v. Louisiana*, 128 S. Ct. 1203 (2008); *Miller-El v. Dretke*, 545 U.S. 231 (2005); *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 534 U.S. 1122 (2002).

But the Court's reliance on *Batson* as a means of preventing racial discrimination in capital jury selection is profoundly misplaced. Studies of the effectiveness of *Batson* in reducing the race-based use of peremptory strikes have demonstrated only an extremely modest effect.<sup>51</sup> This is not surprising in light of the incentives that exist to base peremptory strikes at least in part upon the race of prospective jurors and the ease with which "race neutral" explanations for strikes can be offered.

If the race-based use of peremptory strikes depended on racial hatred or the belief in the intrinsic inferiority of minority jurors, then there would undoubtedly be much less race-based use of peremptories than is evident today. However, there is clearly a great deal of what economists call "rational discrimination" in jury selection. Counsel on both sides make decisions about the desirability of jurors from particular demographic groups based on generalizations about attitudes that the group as a whole tends to hold. There is good reason, based on polling data, to believe that blacks as a group are more sympathetic to criminal defendants and less trusting of law enforcement than whites, and that blacks as a group are less supportive of capital punishment than whites. Moreover, in cases involving black defendants, there is reason to believe that black jurors may be more personally sympathetic to the defendant than white jurors and more likely to perceive "remorse" on the part of the defendant, a perception crucial to obtaining life verdicts in capital sentencings.<sup>52</sup> Under such circumstances, capital prosecutors who harbor no personal racial animosity may well see strong reasons to use race as a proxy for viewpoint in using peremptory challenges, especially when they often have little other information to go on.

In implementing *Batson*, the Court has held that a prosecutor's race neutral explanation need not be "persuasive, or even plausible" – it must simply be sincerely non-racial.<sup>53</sup> It can be perilous for a prosecutor to offer as an explanation some aspect of a struck minority juror that is also true of white jurors whom the prosecutor failed to strike.<sup>54</sup> But one sort of explanation remains a virtually guaranteed race neutral explanation – an objection to a prospective juror's demeanor (e.g., the juror appeared hostile, nervous, bored, made poor eye contact, made too much eye contact, smiled or laughed inappropriately, frowned). Because no lawyer or judge can simultaneously monitor all of the prospective jurors' demeanors throughout all of voir dire, and because perceptions about the meaning of demeanor can vary, there is no way to disprove a prosecutor's claim that a particular juror

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51. See, e.g., William J. Bowers, et al., *Death Sentencing in Black and White: An Empirical Analysis of the Role of Jurors' Race and Jury Racial Composition*, 3 U. Pa. J. Const. L. 171 (2001).

52. See Stephen P. Garvey, *Aggravation and Mitigation in Capital Cases: What Do Jurors Think?* 98 Colum. L. Rev. 1538 (1998).

53. *Purkett v. Elem*, 514 U.S. 765, 768 (1995) (accepting the prosecutor's professed objection to the struck jurors' hairstyle and facial hair as an acceptable non-racial reason).

54. These sorts of comparisons formed the basis for the reversals in *Miller-El v. Dretke* and *Snyder*, *supra* note 50.

appeared more “hostile” to him than the others. To reject such an explanation, a trial judge would have to make a credibility determination against a prosecutor – something judges are not prone to do lightly and in the absence of any hard evidence. Moreover, prosecutors may offer such explanations not only from a calculated attempt to preserve a dubious strike, but also in some cases from an honest perception built on the foundations of “rational discrimination.” Starting from a belief that black jurors are more hostile to law enforcement or less supportive of the death penalty, a prosecutor in a capital case may genuinely believe that he or she is perceiving hostility from prospective minority jurors.

In short, there is little reason to put much faith in *Batson* as a strong protection against the racial skewing of capital juries. This skewing should concern us not merely because it inevitably affects perceptions about the fairness of the capital justice system, but because there is strong reason to believe that the race of capital jurors affects the outcomes of capital trials (just as there is reason to believe that the race of victims and defendants does).<sup>55</sup>

3. *Innocence*.—Just as *McCleskey* effectively precludes challenges to racial discrimination in capital sentencing (at least challenges based on patterns of outcomes over time), the Court’s doctrine also makes virtually no place for constitutional consideration of claims of innocence. In *Herrera v. Collins*,<sup>56</sup> the Court rejected petitioner’s claim of actual innocence as a cognizable constitutional claim in federal habeas review. The Court held that while claims of actual innocence may in some circumstances open federal habeas review to other constitutional claims that would otherwise be barred from consideration, the innocence claims themselves are not generally cognizable on habeas. The Court assumed – without deciding – that a “truly persuasive” showing of innocence would constitute a constitutional claim and warrant habeas relief *if* no state forum were available to process such a claim.<sup>57</sup> But, the Court found that Herrera’s claim failed to meet this standard. More recently, the Court has suggested just how high a threshold its (still hypothetical) requirement of a “truly persuasive” showing of innocence would prove to be. In *House v. Bell*,<sup>58</sup> the petitioner sought federal review with substantial new evidence challenging the accuracy of his murder conviction, including DNA evidence conclusively establishing that semen recovered from the victim’s body that had been portrayed at trial as “consistent” with the defendant actually came from the victim’s husband, as well as evidence of a confession to the murder by the husband and evidence of a history of spousal abuse. The Court held that this strong showing of

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55. See Bowers, et al., *Death Sentencing in Black and White*, supra note 51.

56. 506 U.S. 390 (1993).

57. *Id.* at 417.

58. 547 U.S. 518 (2006).

actual innocence was the rare case sufficient to obtain federal habeas review for petitioner's *other* constitutional claims that would otherwise have been barred, because no reasonable juror viewing the record as a whole would lack reasonable doubt. But even this high showing was inadequate, concluded the Court, to meet the "extraordinarily high" standard of proof hypothetically posited in *Herrera*.<sup>59</sup>

This daunting standard of proof suggests that even if the Court does eventually hold that some innocence claims may be cognizable on habeas, such review will be extraordinarily rare. Thus, the problem of dealing with the possibility of wrongful convictions in the capital context (like the problem of dealing with patterns of racial disparity) has been placed in the legislative rather than the constitutional arena. The reliance on the political realm to deal with the issue of wrongful convictions is less troubling than such reliance on the issue of racial disparities, because there is far more public outcry about the former rather than the latter issue. But the problem of wrongful convictions in the capital context has proven to be larger and more intractable than might have been predicted. The large numbers of exonerations in capital cases may be due in part to the fact that many of the systemic failures that lead to wrongful convictions are likely to be more common in capital than other cases. Moreover, courts have been resistant both to providing convicted defendants with plausible claims of innocence the resources (including access to DNA evidence) necessary to make out their innocence claims, and to granting relief even when strong cases have been made. Finally, larger-scale reforms that might eliminate or ameliorate the problem of wrongful convictions are often politically unpopular, expensive, or of uncertain efficacy. (See section on "Erroneous Conviction of the Innocent," below.)

4. *Counsel*.—Unlike innocence, the problem of inadequate counsel has been squarely held to undermine the constitutional validity of a conviction. Despite the fact that "effective assistance of counsel" is a recognized constitutional right, the scope of the right and the nature of the remedy have precluded the courts from being able to ensure the adequacy of representation in capital cases. Perhaps in response to repeated accounts of extraordinarily poor lawyering in capital cases,<sup>60</sup> the Court recently has granted review and ordered relief in a series of capital cases raising ineffectiveness of counsel claims regarding defense attorneys' failure to investigate and present mitigating evidence with sufficient thoroughness<sup>61</sup> – a development that

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59. *Id.* at 555 (quoting *Herrera*).

60. See, e.g., James S. Liebman, *The Overproduction of Death*, 100 Colum. L. Rev. 2030, 2103-10 (2000); Stephen B. Bright, *Counsel for the Poor: The Death Sentence Not for the Worst Crime but for the Worst Lawyer*, 103 Yale L. J. 1835 (1994); Marcia Coyle, et al., *Fatal Defense: Trial and Error in the Nation's Death Belt*, Nat'l L. J., June 11, 1990, at 30.

61. See *Williams v. Taylor*, 529 U.S. 362 (2000); *Wiggins v. Smith*, 539 U.S. 510 (2003); *Rompilla v. Beard*, 545 U.S. 374 (2005).

might be viewed as raising the constitutional bar for attorney performance, at least in the sentencing phase of capital trials.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, constitutional review and reversal remain an inadequate means of ensuring adequate representation, both because the constitutional standard for ineffectiveness remains too difficult to establish in most cases, and because the remedy of reversal is too limited to induce the systemic changes that are necessary to raise the level of defense services.

One of the hurdles to regulating attorney competence through constitutional review is the legal standard for ineffective assistance of counsel. In crafting the governing standard in *Strickland v. Washington*,<sup>63</sup> the Court maintained that “the purpose of the effective assistance guarantee of the Sixth Amendment is not to improve the quality of legal representation, although that is a goal of considerable importance to the legal system.”<sup>64</sup> In light of the Sixth Amendment’s more modest goal of ensuring that the outcome of a particular legal proceeding crosses the constitutional threshold of reliability, the Court established a strong presumption in favor of finding attorney conduct reasonable under the Sixth Amendment, in order to prevent a flood of frivolous litigation, to protect against the distorting effects of hindsight, and to preserve the defense bar’s creativity and autonomy. This general deference was amplified for “strategic choices,” which the *Strickland* Court described as “virtually unchallengeable.”<sup>65</sup> Moreover, the Court declined to enumerate in any but the most general way the duties of defense counsel, instead deferring to general professional norms. Finally, the requirement that a defendant also prove “prejudice” from attorney error (a reasonable probability that the outcome of the trial would be different) necessarily immunizes many incompetent legal performances from reversal, if the guilt of the defendant is sufficiently clear.

The difficulty of meeting the legal standard, even in cases of manifestly incompetent counsel, is amplified by the procedural context in which such claims are made. Although there is often no legal bar to raising claims of ineffective assistance on direct appeal (when indigent defendants still have a constitutional right to appointed counsel), appellate review is appropriate only for record claims, where the basis for asserting ineffective assistance is a trial error evident from the transcript (such as failure to object to the

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62. Compare the outcomes and analysis in *Williams*, *Wiggins*, and *Rompilla* to the Court’s earlier rejections of claims of ineffective representation in capital sentencing proceedings in *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984), and *Burger v. Kemp*, 483 U.S. 776 (1987).

63. 466 U.S. 668.

64. *Id.* at 689.

65. *Id.* at 690. Note that often the primary source of information in ineffective assistance litigation is trial counsel him- or herself, who will often have obvious reasons to resist the implication of ineffectiveness and testify accordingly. Hence, the enormous deference to “strategic choices” allows attorneys who wish to justify their decisions at a later date an obvious means to do so, though the Court did qualify its deference by noting that “strategic choices made after less than complete investigation are reasonable precisely to the extent that reasonable professional judgments support the limitations on investigation.” *Id.* at 690-91.



introduction of prejudicial evidence by the state). Claims of ineffective assistance, however, routinely involve the presentation of factual evidence beyond the record – e.g., evidence about information that the defense attorney failed to discover or to introduce, evidence about the likely answers to questions that the defense attorney failed to pursue at trial, or evidence about the defense attorney’s interaction with the defendant. Such evidence must be developed in collateral proceedings, where the constitutional right to counsel runs out.<sup>66</sup> Although almost all states formally provide for counsel for indigent defendants in capital post-conviction proceedings,<sup>67</sup> there is virtually no monitoring of the performance of such counsel.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, should post-conviction counsel fail to perform adequately, *their* ineffectiveness does not preserve the claims that they are seeking to raise from state procedural bars, because there is no constitutional right to counsel in such proceedings.<sup>69</sup> The inadequacy of postconviction representation is compounded by the deferential review of state court decisions under the 1996 habeas statute (AEDPA), which seeks to ensure that state post-conviction proceedings are the primary venue for the litigation of non-record claims. The decline in the number of federal habeas grants of relief in the post-AEDPA era demonstrates the impact that AEDPA has had – an impact necessarily greatest on claims, like those of ineffective counsel, that will rarely see direct review.<sup>70</sup>

The constitutional review and reversal of individual capital convictions is by its nature an inadequate tool for achieving the institutional changes that are necessary in the provision of indigent defense services in capital cases. On the same day that the Court announced the constitutional standard in *Strickland*, it decided a companion case, *United States v. Cronin*,<sup>71</sup> which rejected a claim of ineffectiveness based on the circumstances faced by the

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66. See *Murray v. Giarratano*, 492 U.S. 1 (1989) (rejecting constitutional right to representation for indigent prisoners seeking postconviction relief in capital cases).

67. Alabama is a notable exception.

68. See Celestine Richards McConville, *The Right to Effective Assistance of Capital Postconviction Counsel: Constitutional Implications of Statutory Grants of Capital Counsel*, 2003 Wis. L. Rev. 31, 66 (although some states have informal means of monitoring the performance of postconviction counsel, only Florida requires such monitoring).

69. In *Coleman v. Thompson*, 501 U.S. 722 (1991), post-conviction counsel’s failure to file a timely appeal from the denial of post-conviction relief barred federal habeas review of petitioner’s claim regarding the ineffectiveness of his trial counsel. The Court did, however, note without deciding the question whether “there must be an exception [to *Giarratano*] in those cases where state collateral review is the first place a prisoner can present a challenge to his conviction.” *Id.* at 755. The Court avoided the question by noting that the default in Coleman’s case happened on appeal from a merits denial of post-conviction relief, and thus he had been afforded a forum for litigating his ineffectiveness claim.

70. Compare James Liebman, et al., *A Broken System: Error Rates in Capital Cases, 1973-95* (2000), available at <http://www2.law.columbia.edu/instructionalservices/liebman/> (40% federal habeas reversal rate in capital cases during pre-AEDPA period), with Nancy King, et al., *Habeas Litigation in U.S. District Courts* (2007) (12.5% federal habeas reversal rate in capital cases during post-AEDPA period).

71. 466 U.S. 648 (1984).

defense attorney in litigating the case (lack of time to prepare, inexperience, seriousness of the charges, etc.). The Court insisted that a defendant must identify particular prejudicial errors made by counsel, rather than merely identify circumstances that suggest that errors would likely be made. *Cronic* has widely been held by courts to preclude Sixth Amendment challenges to the institutional arrangements (fee structures, caseloads, availability of investigative or expert services, lack of training and experience, etc.) that lead to incompetent representation, except in the most extraordinary of circumstances.<sup>72</sup> Without any ability to directly control fees, caseloads, resources, or training, courts conducting Sixth Amendment review of convictions can only reverse individual convictions based on individual errors. And even an extended period of substantial numbers of reversals on ineffectiveness grounds has failed to produce substantial reform in the provision of capital defense services. Despite the fact that “egregiously incompetent defense lawyering” was the most common reversible error in capital cases (39%) in a more than two-decade period (1973-1995) with an overall reversible error rate of 68%,<sup>73</sup> there is no reason to believe that these reversals promoted systemic reform. Indeed, the absence of systemic assurance of adequate counsel in capital cases formed a cornerstone of the American Bar Association’s call for a moratorium on executions in 1997, two years after the end of the studied period.<sup>74</sup>

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The best evidence of the inadequacies of constitutional regulation of capital punishment is the sheer number of Justices who have either abandoned the enterprise, in whole or in part, or raised serious questions about its feasibility. The attempt to regulate the capital justice process through constitutional supervision is not in its infancy; the Court has had nearly four decades of experience in implementing it. Notably, two of the four Justices who dissented in *Furman* in 1972 eventually came full circle and repudiated the constitutional permissibility of the death penalty. Justice Blackmun did so in a long and carefully reasoned dissent from denial of certiorari, concluding twenty-two years after *Furman*, that “the death penalty experiment has failed.”<sup>75</sup> Justice Powell did so in reviewing his career in an interview with his official biographer after his retirement. Justice Stevens, one of the three-Justice plurality that reinstated the death penalty in the 1976 cases, this past Term has concluded that the death penalty should be ruled unconstitutional, though he has committed himself to *stare decisis* in

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72. See Richard Klein, *The Constitutionalization of Ineffective Assistance of Counsel*, 58 Md. L. Rev. 1433 (1999).

73. Liebman, et al., *A Broken System*, *supra* note 70.

74. The text of the ABA moratorium and a copy of the supporting report are available at <http://www.abanet.org/moratorium/resolution.html>.

75. *Callins*, 510 U.S. at 1145 (1994) (Blackmun, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari).

applying the Court's precedents.<sup>76</sup> In explaining his own change in constitutional judgment, Justice Stevens offers a long list of concerns about the administration of the death penalty and notes that the Court's 1976 decisions relied heavily on the now untenable belief "that adequate procedures were in place that would avoid the [dangers noted in *Furman*] of discriminatory application . . . arbitrary application . . . and excessiveness."<sup>77</sup> Justices Scalia and Thomas have repudiated the Court's Eighth Amendment jurisprudence as hopelessly contradictory and unable to promote guided discretion. Justices Kennedy, Souter, and Breyer each have authored opinions raising a variety of serious concerns about the administration of capital punishment and the ability of constitutional regulation to prevent injustice.<sup>78</sup> Finally, Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg have both given speeches questioning the soundness of the capital justice process on the ground of inadequate provision of capital defense services.<sup>79</sup> We can think of no other constitutional doctrine that has been so seriously questioned both by its initial supporters and later generations of Justices who have tried in good faith to implement it. Such reservations strongly suggest that the constitutional regulation of capital punishment has not succeeded on its own terms.

The question remains whether the Institute should undertake a new law reform project to ameliorate the consequences of the Supreme Court's unsuccessful regime of constitutional regulation of capital punishment, given that the Institute's prior law reform project in this area (MPC § 210.6) played a role in initiating and shaping the Court's current approach. Militating against such a course of action is the fact that the problems currently afflicting the capital justice process are not addressable in the absence of larger scale political or institutional changes that are either impossible or

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76. See *Baze v. Rees*, 128 S. Ct. 1520, 1552 (2008) (Stevens, J., concurring).

77. *Id.* at 1550.

78. See *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, 128 S. Ct. 2641, 2661 (2008) (emphasizing "the imprecision [in the definition of capital murder] and the tension between evaluating the individual circumstances and consistency of treatment" that plague the administration of the death penalty as a reason for not extending the penalty to cases in which the victim does not die) (majority opinion joined by Stevens, Souter, Ginsburg, and Breyer); *Kansas v. Marsh*, 548 U.S. 163, 207-11 (2006) (emphasizing the risk of erroneous conviction in the current capital justice process as a reason to reject a capital scheme that required a death sentence when aggravating and mitigating evidence were in equipoise) (Souter dissent, joined by Stevens, Ginsburg, and Breyer); *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584, 616 (2002) (emphasizing the continued division of opinion as to whether capital punishment is in all circumstances "cruel and unusual punishment" as currently administered as grounds for requiring jury sentencing in all capital cases) (Breyer concurrence for himself alone).

79. In 2001, Justice O'Connor criticized the administration of capital punishment on the grounds of wrongful conviction and inadequate provision of defense services. See Associated Press, *O'Connor Questions Death Penalty*, N.Y. Times, July 4, 2001. The same year, Justice Ginsburg told a public audience that she supported a state moratorium on the death penalty, noting that she had "yet to see a death case among the dozens coming to the Supreme Court on eve-of-execution stay applications in which the defendant was well-represented at trial." Associated Press, *Ginsburg Backs Ending Death Penalty*, Apr. 9, 2001, available at <http://www.truthinjustice.org/ginsburg.htm>.

beyond the scope of an ALI-style law reform project. The scope of these problems – which we survey below – demonstrates that a more appropriate response by the Institute would be the withdrawal of § 210.6 with a statement calling for the rejection of capital punishment as a penal option.

## II. The Politicization of Capital Punishment

Perhaps the most important feature of the landscape of capital punishment administration that imperils the success of any discrete law reform project is the intense politicization of the death penalty. Capital punishment (like the rest of criminal justice in the United States) is politicized *institutionally*, in that some or all of the most important actors in the administration of capital punishment are elected (with the exception of lay jurors). At the same time, capital punishment is politicized *symbolically*, in that it looms much larger than it plausibly should in public discourse because of its power as a focus for fears of violent crime and as political shorthand for support for “law and order” policies generally. These two aspects of politicization ensure that the institutional actors responsible for the administration of the capital justice process are routinely subject to intense pressures, which in turn contribute to the array of problems that we review below – e.g., inadequate representation, wrongful convictions, and disparate racial impact. There is little hope of successfully addressing these problems in the absence of profound change on the politicization front.

The vast majority of death penalty jurisdictions within the United States have elected rather than appointed prosecutors, and these prosecutors are usually autonomous decisionmakers in their own small locales (counties). Rarely is there any state or regional review of local decisionmaking or coordination of capital prosecutions. These simple facts of institutional organization generate enormous geographic disparities within most death penalty jurisdictions. In Texas, for example, Dallas County (Dallas) and Harris County (Houston), two counties with similar demographics and crime rates, have had very different death sentencing rates, with Dallas County returning 11 death verdicts per thousand homicides, while Harris County returns 19. One sees an even greater disjunction in Pennsylvania between Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) and Philadelphia County (Philadelphia), which have death verdict rates of 12 and 27 per thousand homicides, respectively. In Georgia, another significant death penalty state, the death sentencing rate ranges from 4 death verdicts per thousand homicides in Fulton County (Atlanta) to 33 in rural Muscogee County – a difference of more than 700%. Large geographic variations exist within many other states that are similarly uncorrelated with differences in homicide rates.<sup>80</sup> These

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80. See generally James S. Liebman, et al., *A Broken System, Part II: Why There Is So Much Error in Capital Cases, and What Can Be Done About It* (2002), available at <http://www2.law.columbia.edu/brokensystem2/index2.html>.

geographic disparities are troubling in themselves because they suggest that state death penalty legislation is unable to standardize the considerations that are brought to bear in capital prosecutions so as to limit major fluctuations in its application across the state. But these geographic disparities are also troubling because they may be one of the sources of the persistent racial disparities in the administration of capital punishment in many states. (See section on “Race Discrimination” below.)

In addition, the symbolic politics of capital punishment is very much at play in the election of local prosecutors. Candidates for local district attorney and state attorney general in a wide variety of jurisdictions have run campaigns touting their capital conviction records, even going so far as listing individual defendants sentenced to death.<sup>81</sup> As a practical matter, an elected prosecutor’s capital conviction record should be a relatively small part of any prosecutor’s portfolio, given the limited number of capital cases that any prosecutorial office will handle – a small fraction of all homicide cases, and an even smaller fraction of all serious crimes. (Remember that even Harris County, Texas, has a death verdict rate of only 1.9% of all homicides). Clearly, many prosecutorial candidates perceive that the voting public has a special interest in capital cases, both because of the fear generated by the underlying crimes that give rise to capital prosecution and because a prosecutor’s support for capital punishment represents in powerful shorthand a prosecutor’s “toughness” on crime. These general incentives are troubling in themselves, because they suggest that political incentives may exist to bring capital charges and to win death verdicts, quite apart from the underlying merits of the cases.<sup>82</sup> Even more troubling is the incentives that may exist to favor those in a position to provide campaign contributions or votes. The racial disparities in capital charging decisions favoring cases with white victims mirror the racial disparities in political influence in the vast majority of communities.<sup>83</sup>

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81. See John Blume & Theodore Eisenberg, *Judicial Politics, Death Penalty Appeals, and Case Selection: An Empirical Study*, 72 S. Cal. L. Rev. 465, 474-75 (1999); Kenneth Bresler, *Seeking Justice, Seeking Election, and Seeking the Death Penalty: The Ethics of Prosecutorial Candidates’ Campaigning on Capital Convictions*, 7 Geo. J. Legal Ethics 941 (1994).

82. The federal system presents a different picture with regard to the problem of political pressures on prosecutors, because federal prosecutors are appointed rather than elected. Moreover, unlike most local district attorneys, federal prosecutors must subject their decisions to seek the death penalty to centralized review by Main Justice. While federal cases may be different in important respects from state cases (in degree of politicization, among other things), the MPC was designed as a state penal code. Thus, any such differences are not relevant to the question of how the Institute should address the capacity of § 210.6 to address the problems common to most state death penalty systems.

83. The Baldus study on racial disparities in capital sentencing, see *supra* note 33, also found evidence that charging decisions were strongly correlated with the race of murder victims. These statistical findings parallel anecdotal evidence from lawyers in the field. Stephen Bright, Director of the Southern Center for Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia, describes an incident in a Georgia county: “In a case involving the murder of the daughter of a prominent white contractor, the prosecutor contacted the contractor and asked him if he wanted to seek the death penalty. When the

Judges as well as prosecutors must face the intense politicization that surrounds the administration of capital punishment. Almost 90% of state judges face some kind of popular election.<sup>84</sup> Politicization of capital punishment in judicial elections has famously ousted Chief Justice Rose Bird and colleagues Cruz Reynoso and Joseph Grodin from the California Supreme Court,<sup>85</sup> as well as Justice Penny White from the Tennessee Supreme Court.<sup>86</sup> These high-profile examples are only the tip of the iceberg of political pressure, as no judge facing election could be unaware of the high salience of capital punishment in the minds of voters, especially in times of rising crime rates or especially high-profile murders. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, after an official visit to the United States, reported that many of those with whom he spoke in Alabama and Texas, which both have partisan judicial elections, suggested that “judges in both states consider themselves to be under popular pressure to impose and uphold death sentences whenever possible and that decisions to the contrary would lead to electoral defeat.”<sup>87</sup>

Of course, there is every hope and reason to expect that most judges will conscientiously endeavor to resist such pressures and decide cases without regard to political influences. Despite the fact that there is good reason to have confidence in the personal integrity of the individual men and women who comprise the elected judiciary, several statistical studies suggest that, in the aggregate, judicial behavior in criminal cases generally and capital cases in particular appears to be influenced by election cycles.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, in

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contractor replied in the affirmative, the prosecutor said that was all he needed to know. He obtained the death penalty at trial. He was rewarded with a contribution of \$5,000 from the contractor when he successfully ran for judge in the next election. The contribution was the largest received by the District Attorney.” Stephen B. Bright, *Death and Denial: The Tolerance of Racial Discrimination in Infliction of the Death Penalty*, 35 Santa Clara L. Rev. 433, 453-54 (1995). This case was part of a larger pattern of prosecutors meeting the families of white murder victims to discuss the bringing of capital charges, but not with the families of black murder victims. *See id.*

84. Matthew Streb, *Running for Judge: The Rising Political, Financial and Legal Stakes of Judicial Elections* 7 (2007).

85. *See* Joseph R. Grodin, *Judicial Elections: The California Experience*, 70 *Judicature* 365, 367 (1987) (describing television spot that encouraged voters to vote “three times for the death penalty; vote no on Bird, Reynoso, Grodin”).

86. Stephen B. Bright, *Political Attacks on the Judiciary: Can Justice Be Done Amid Efforts to Intimidate and Remove Judges from Office for Unpopular Decisions?* 72 *N.Y.U. L. Rev.* 308, 314 (1997) (describing opposing party’s political add “Vote for Capital Punishment by Voting NO on August 1 for Supreme Court Justice Penny White”).

87. Press Statement, Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, June 30, 2008. A recent political advertisement by a Texas trial court judge reflects the influence of public pressure to return death verdicts. Judge Elizabeth Coker’s advertisement offers as the first reason to re-elect her the fact that she “cleared the way for the jury to issue a death sentence” in John Paul Penry’s capital murder trial after it had been reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court for a second time. (A copy of the advertisement is on file with the authors.)

88. *See* Gregory A. Huber & Sanford C. Gordon, *Accountability and Coercion: Is Justice Blind When It Runs for Office?* 48 *Am. J. Pol. Sci.* 247 (2004) (finding that trial judges standing for election tend to impose harsher sentences as elections approach); Melinda Gann Hall, *Electoral*

many jurisdictions, judges not only preside over and review capital trials, they also appoint lawyers, approve legal fees, and approve funding for mitigation and other expert services. These decisions, which are crucial to the capital justice process, are less visible but no less likely to be subject to political pressures.<sup>89</sup> Finally, in a few capital jurisdictions, elected judges actually impose sentences in capital cases through their power to override jury verdicts, and a comparison among these states strongly suggests that the degree of electoral accountability influences the direction of such overrides.<sup>90</sup> One potential avenue for mitigating the effect of political pressure on elected judges was foreclosed when the Supreme Court struck down, on First Amendment grounds, a state law barring a judicial candidate from announcing his or her views on disputed legal or political issues.<sup>91</sup> The Court's decision invalidated laws in nine states, and it has been interpreted broadly by lower courts, who have struck down other limitations on judicial candidates, including those on both fundraising and campaign promises, that were part of the law in many more states.<sup>92</sup>

Governors, too, are influenced by the intense politicization of capital punishment. Like prosecutors and judges, Governors have often campaigned on their support for the death penalty, emphasizing their willingness to sign

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*Politics and Strategic Voting in State Supreme Courts*, 54 J. Pol. 427 (1992) (finding that district-based elections influence justices in state supreme courts to join conservative majorities in death penalty cases in Texas, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Kentucky); Paul Brace & Brent D. Boyea, *State Public Opinion, the Death Penalty, and the Practice of Electing Judges*, 52 Am. J. Pol. Sci. 360 (2008) (finding that judicial behavior in affirming death sentences is correlated with public opinion about the death penalty only in states where judges face election and not in states where judges are appointed); *but cf.* John Blume & Theodore Eisenberg, *Judicial Politics, Death Penalty Appeals, and Case Selection: An Empirical Study*, 72 S. Cal. L. Rev. 465 (1999) (finding no system-wide evidence of the effect of state judicial election methods on capital case outcomes, but finding other evidence confirming the politically charged character of the death penalty in state courts).

89. For example, defense lawyers in the pool of those seeking appointments to capital cases contributed money to the election and re-election campaigns of judges in Harris County, Texas – the county responsible for the largest number of executions in the United States. See Amnesty International, *One County, 100 Executions: Harris County and Texas – A Lethal Combination* 10 (2007), available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/125/2007>.

90. Elected judges in Alabama and Florida have been far more likely to use their power to override jury verdicts to impose death when the jury has sentenced the convicted person to life in prison than to replace a jury verdict of death with one of life. In contrast, judges in Delaware, who do not stand for election, are far less likely to override in favor of death than to override in favor of life. See Stephen B. Bright & Patrick J. Keenan, *Judges and the Politics of Death: Deciding Between the Bill of Rights and the Next Election in Capital Cases*, 75 B.U. L. Rev. 759, 793-94 (1995). Moreover, in Alabama, overrides in favor of death have appeared to be more frequent in election years. See Ronald J. Tabak, *Politics and the Death Penalty: Can Rational Discourse and Due Process Survive the Perceived Political Pressure?*, 21 Fordham Urb. L. J. 239, 255-56 (1994).

91. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002).

92. See Roy A. Schotland, *New Challenges to States' Judicial Selection*, 95 Geo. L. J. 1077, 1095-96 (2007).

death warrants.<sup>93</sup> While Governors are less implicated in the day-to-day workings of the capital justice process than prosecutors and judges, they play a crucial role in the exercise of clemency powers, which the Supreme Court has recognized as an important defense against conviction and execution of the innocent.<sup>94</sup> Some Governors, like George Ryan of Illinois, have not been afraid to use the clemency power to respond to concerns about wrongful conviction. However, the trend in the use of the clemency power in capital cases has been sharply downward in the decades since the reinstatement of capital punishment in 1976, at the same time that the trend in death sentencing and executions has been sharply upward.<sup>95</sup> The persistent high political salience of capital punishment, as reflected by its prominence at all levels of political discourse,<sup>96</sup> has no doubt affected the willingness of Governors to set aside death sentences.<sup>97</sup>

Finally, the politicization of the issue of capital punishment in the legislative sphere limits the capacity of legislatures to promote and maintain statutory reform. The kind of statutory reform that many regard as the most promising for ameliorating arbitrariness and discrimination in the application of the death penalty is strict narrowing of the category of those eligible for capital crimes. Justice Stevens argued that unfettered discretion to grant mercy based on open-ended consideration of mitigating evidence (which is commanded by the constitution) is not fundamentally inconsistent with guided discretion (which is also commanded by the constitution), provided that the category of the death eligible is truly limited to the “tip of the pyramid.”<sup>98</sup> And the Baldus study reported that racial disparities were not evident in the distribution of death sentences for the category of the most aggravated murders, because death sentences were so common in this category.<sup>99</sup> A few states, like New York, have managed to maintain a

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93. See Carol S. Steiker, *Capital Punishment and American Exceptionalism*, in Michael Ignatieff, ed., *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights* 71 (2005) (noting examples of John K. Van de Kamp in California, Jim Mattox in Texas, and Bob Martinez in Florida).

94. See the discussion of *Herrera v. Collins*, 506 U.S. 390 (1993), in the “Constitutional Regulation” section, *supra* notes 55-59 and accompanying text.

95. See Elizabeth Rapaport, *Straight is the Gate: Capital Clemency in the United States from Gregg to Atkins*, 33 N.M. L. Rev. 349 (2003).

96. Even presidential politics is profoundly marked by capital punishment, though the federal government in general, and the President in particular, plays a very small role in the administration of capital punishment, other than through the appointment of Justices to the Supreme Court.

97. One dramatic example of the political costs of clemency is the 1994 Pennsylvania gubernatorial race between Republican Tom Ridge and Democrat Mark Singel. Singel had been chairman of the state’s Board of Pardons, which had released an inmate who was arrested on murder charges a month before the election. Overnight, Singel went from leading Ridge by 4 points to trailing him by 12: Singel’s commutation recommendation lost him the election. See Tina Rosenberg, *The Deadliest D.A.*, N.Y. Times, July 16, 1995.

98. See the discussion of Stevens’ opinion in *Walton v. Arizona*, 497 U.S. 639 (1990), in the “Constitutional Regulation” section, *supra* notes 32-36 and accompanying text.

99. See the discussion of the Baldus study in the section on “Race Discrimination,” *infra* at 27-28.



relatively narrow death penalty.<sup>100</sup> However, most states have been unwilling to restrict the scope of the death penalty, and the continued inclusion of broad aggravators like felony murder, pecuniary gain, future dangerousness, and heinousness (or its equivalent) preclude the strict narrowing approach in most jurisdictions.

Moreover, even if a jurisdiction were able to pass a truly narrow death penalty (something more likely in an abolitionist jurisdiction reinstating the death penalty than in a retentionist jurisdiction sharply curtailing a current statute), the political pressure to expand the ambit of the death penalty over time will likely prove politically irresistible. The tendency of existing statutes, even already broad ones, to expand over time through the addition of new aggravating factors has been well documented.<sup>101</sup> When former Governor Mitt Romney introduced legislation drafted by a blue-ribbon commission to reinstitute capital punishment in Massachusetts, supporters of the draft emphasized the very narrow ambit of proposed statute. However, a symposium of experts organized to discuss the proposed statute noted the problem of what one of them called “aggravator creep” (an analogy to “mission creep” referred to in military contexts), in which “[a] statute is passed with a list of aggravating factors, and then structural impulses often push that list to become longer and longer as new aggravators are added.”<sup>102</sup> The most eloquent case for the inevitability of “aggravator creep” has been made by lawyer and novelist Scott Turow. Turow, a former federal prosecutor who supported the death penalty for most of his life, wrote a (nonfiction) book describing how his later pro bono work on the capital appeal of a wrongfully convicted man and his service on the Illinois Governor’s Commission to reform the death penalty convinced him to vote as a Commission member for abolition rather than reform. As a moral matter, Turow remains persuaded that a narrow death penalty is both morally permissible and desirable. But he has come to see that expansion is inevitable, with the arbitrariness and potential for error that expansive capital statutes necessarily entail:

The furious heat of grief and rage the worst cases inspire will inevitably short-circuit our judgment and always be a snare for the innocent. And the fundamental equality of each survivor’s loss, and

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100. Indeed, New York even refused to re-authorize the penalty after its highest court invalidated the state’s death penalty statute on easily remediable state constitutional grounds. But states like New York and New Jersey (the only state to legislatively abolish capital punishment since its reinstatement in 1976) are outliers. They did not participate significantly in the practice of capital punishment in the modern era even while formally retaining the death penalty.

101. Jonathan Simon & Christina Spaulding, *Tokens of Our Esteem: Aggravating Factors in the Era of Deregulated Death Penalties*, in Austin Sarat, ed., *The Killing State: Capital Punishment in Law, Politics, and Culture* (1999); Jeffrey L. Kirchmeier, *Casting a Wider Net: Another Decade of Legislative Expansion of the Death Penalty in the United States*, 34 *Pepperdine L. Rev.* 1 (2006).

102. See *Symposium: Toward a Model Death Penalty Code: The Massachusetts Governor’s Council Report. Panel One – The Capital Crime*, 80 *Ind. L. J.* 35, 35 (2005) (statement of Edwin Colfax).

the manner in which the wayward imaginations of criminals continue to surprise us, will inevitably cause the categories for death eligibility to expand, a slippery slope of what-about-hims.<sup>103</sup>

The foregoing suggests that politicization of the death penalty, both within the capital justice process and more broadly in the realm of public policy and discourse, threatens both the integrity of individual cases and the prospects for reform. This politicization is the most far-reaching, important, and intractable reason to be dubious of the prospects for success of an ALI reform project in this area.

### III. Race Discrimination

Race discrimination has cast a long shadow over the history of the American death penalty. During the antebellum period, race discrimination was not merely a matter of practice but a matter of law, as many Southern jurisdictions made the availability of the death penalty turn on the race of the defendant or victim.<sup>104</sup> After the Civil War, the discriminatory Black Codes were largely abandoned, but discrimination in the administration of capital punishment persisted. Discrimination permeated both the selection of those to die as well as the selection of those who could participate in the criminal justice process. African Americans were more frequently executed for non-homicidal crimes, were more likely to be executed without appeals, and were more likely to be executed at young ages.<sup>105</sup> Discrimination was most pronounced in Southern jurisdictions. The most obvious discrimination occurred in capital rape prosecutions, as such prosecutions almost uniformly targeted minority offenders alleged to have assaulted white victims, and the numerous executions for rape post-1930 (455) were entirely confined to Southern jurisdictions, border states, and the District of Columbia.<sup>106</sup> Until the early 1960s, the differential treatment of both African-American offenders and African-American victims was attributable in part to the exclusion of African-Americans from jury service, again largely (although not exclusively) concentrated in Southern and border-state jurisdictions.

When the Supreme Court first signaled its interest in constitutionally regulating capital punishment in the early 1960s, several Justices issued a dissent from denial of certiorari indicating their willingness to address whether the death penalty is disproportionate for the crime of rape.<sup>107</sup>

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103. Scott Turow, *Ultimate Punishment: A Lawyer's Reflections on Dealing with the Death Penalty* 114 (2003).

104. Stuart Banner, *The Death Penalty: An American History* (2002).

105. William J. Bowers, *Legal Homicide: Death as Punishment in America, 1864-1982*, 67-87 (1984).

106. Marvin E. Wolfgang, *Race Discrimination in the Death Sentence for Rape*, in William J. Bowers, *Executions in America* 113 (1974).

107. *Rudolph v. Alabama*, 375 U.S. 889, 889-91 (1963) (Goldberg, J., joined by Douglas and Brennan, JJ., dissenting from denial of certiorari).

Although these Justices did not mention race in their brief statement, they were undoubtedly aware of the racially-skewed use of the death penalty to punish rape. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund thereafter sought to document empirically race discrimination in capital race prosecutions with an eye toward challenging such discrimination in particular cases. The first significant study, produced by Professor Marvin Wolfgang and others at the University of Pennsylvania, found both race-of-the-defendant and race-of-the-victim discrimination in the administration of the death penalty for rape (after controlling for non-racial variables); African-American defendants convicted of raping white females faced a greater than one-third chance of receiving a death sentence whereas all other racial combinations yielded death sentences in about two percent of cases.<sup>108</sup>

The Wolfgang study did not ultimately lead to success in litigation, and the Eighth Circuit's rejection of the study as a basis for constitutional relief, authored by then-Judge Blackmun – foreshadowed the Supreme Court's subsequent denial of relief in *McCleskey*, discussed above.<sup>109</sup> In particular, the judicial response to the statistical demonstration of discrimination was to insist on a showing by the defendant of improper racial motivation in *his* case, a requirement that insulates widespread discriminatory practices from meaningful judicial intervention. But the Wolfgang study did contribute to the accurate perception that the prevailing administration of the death penalty was both arbitrary and discriminatory, and thus contributed to *Furman*'s invalidation of existing statutes and the “unguided” discretion they entailed.

The central question today is whether efforts to guide sentencer discretion – such as the one embodied in the MPC death-sentencing provision – successfully combat the sort of discrimination reflected in the Wolfgang study. The current empirical assessment is “no” – that race discrimination still plagues the administration of the death penalty, though the evidence suggests that race-of-the-victim discrimination is of a much greater magnitude than race-of-the-defendant discrimination. The more difficult question is whether the persistent role of race in capital decisionmaking can be significantly reduced or eradicated, whether through statutory efforts to narrow the reach of the death penalty or other means.

The Baldus study, described above, found that defendants charged in white-victim cases, on average, faced odds of receiving a death sentence that were 4.3 times higher than the odds faced by similarly situated defendants in black-victim cases.<sup>110</sup> Other studies have similarly pointed to a robust relationship between the race of the victim and the decision to seek death and to obtain death sentences (also controlling for non-racial variables). Leigh Bienen produced a study of the New Jersey death penalty that reflected

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108. Wolfgang, *supra* note 106, at 117 (Table 4-2).

109. *Maxwell v. Bishop*, 398 F.2d 138 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1968).

110. *See* Part I, *supra*, at p. 13-14.

greater prosecutorial willingness to seek death in white victim cases.<sup>111</sup> Baldus, et al, studied capital sentences in Philadelphia and found both race-of-the-victim and race-of-the-defendant discrimination.<sup>112</sup> Given the remarkably different histories and demographics of Philadelphia and Georgia, it is surprising that the Philadelphia study found a magnitude of race-of-the-victim effects quite similar to the magnitude found in the Georgia study addressed in *McCleskey*. A federal report issued in 1990, which summarized the then-available empirical work on the effects of race in capital sentencing (28 studies), likewise found consistent race-of-the-victim effects (in 82% of the studies reviewed), particularly in prosecutorial charging decisions.<sup>113</sup>

Apart from these statistical studies, a broad scholarly literature often highlights American racial discord as an important explanatory variable of American exceptionalism with respect to capital punishment – the fact that the United States is alone among Western democracies in retaining and actively implementing the death penalty.<sup>114</sup> Such works point to the fact that executions are overwhelmingly confined to the South (and states bordering the South), the very same jurisdictions that were last to abandon slavery and segregation, and that were most resistant to the federal enforcement of civil rights norms.

Professor Frank Zimring, in his recent broad assessment of the American death penalty, argued that the regional persistence of “vigilante values” strongly contributes to American retention of capital punishment.<sup>115</sup> Many scholars have speculated that contemporary state-imposed executions might serve a role similar to extralegal executions of a previous era, and Zimring observes that “the substantive core of the support for death as a penalty seems to be an ideology of capital punishment as community justice that appears most intensely today in these areas where extreme forms of vigilante justice thrived in earlier times.”<sup>116</sup> A recent article in the *American Sociological Review* presents empirical data supporting the claim that current death sentences might be linked to such vigilante values.<sup>117</sup> The authors report a positive relationship between death sentences, “current racial threat” (reflected in the size of a jurisdiction’s African-American population), and

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111. Leigh Bienen et al., *The Reimposition of Capital Punishment in New Jersey: The Role of Prosecutorial Discretion*, 41 Rutgers L. Rev. 27 (1988).

112. David Baldus, et al., *Race Discrimination and the Death Penalty in the Post-Furman Era: An Empirical and Legal Overview, with Recent Finding from Philadelphia*, 83 Cornell L. Rev. 1638 (1998).

113. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Death Penalty Sentencing* (Feb. 1990).

114. Carol S. Steiker, *Capital Punishment and American Exceptionalism*, in *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, ed. Michael Ignatieff (2005).

115. Franklin E. Zimring, *The Contradictions of American Capital Punishment* (2003).

116. *Id.* at 136.

117. David Jacobs, et al., *Vigilantism, Current Racial Threat, and Death Sentences*, 70 Amer. Soc. Rev. 656 (2005).

“past vigilantism” (reflected in past lynching activity). The authors conclude that: “our repeated findings that this relationship is present support claims that a prior tradition of lethal vigilantism enhances recent attempts to use the death penalty as long as the threat posed by current black populations is sufficient to trigger this legal but lethal control mechanism.”<sup>118</sup>

Supporters of the death penalty would certainly resist the claim that the death penalty remains in place *because of* underlying conscious or unconscious racial prejudice. Moreover, the high level of executions in Southern jurisdictions correlates not only with racial factors (such as past race discrimination and contemporary racial tensions) but also with other potential explanatory factors such as high rates of violent crime and the prevalence of fundamentalist religious beliefs. Some empirical literature, though, modestly supports the claim that racially discriminatory attitudes may account for some of the contemporary support for the death penalty.<sup>119</sup>

The most significant efforts to reduce the effect of race in capital proceedings have focused on narrowing the class of death eligible offenses and guiding sentencer discretion at the punishment phase of capital trials. The first solution – restricting the death penalty to the most aggravated cases – appears promising, because the Baldus study found that race effects essentially disappear in such cases given the very high frequency of death sentences in that range (in the eighth category of cases within the study, with the most aggravation, jurors imposed the death penalty 88% of the time<sup>120</sup>). Indeed, the MPC death sentencing provision could be viewed as one such effort to narrow the death penalty because it requires a finding of an aggravated factor (beyond conviction for murder) to support the imposition of death.

The problem, though, played out over the past thirty years, is that no state has successfully confined the death penalty to a narrow band of the most aggravated cases. Death eligibility in prevailing statutes remains breathtakingly broad, as aggravating factors or their functional equivalent often cover the spectrum of many if not most murders. The MPC provision is representative in this regard, allowing the imposition of death based on any of eight aggravating factors, including murders in the course of several enumerated felonies,<sup>121</sup> and any murder deemed “especially heinous,

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118. *Id.* at 672

119. Several empirical studies have explored the subtle role of race discrimination in death penalty attitudes. *See, e.g.*, Steven E. Barkan & Steven F. Cohn, *Racial Prejudice and Support for the Death Penalty by Whites*, 31 *J. of Research in Crime & Delinquency* 202 (1994) (reporting empirical study in which two indexes of racial prejudice were significantly linked to greater support for the death penalty among whites, even after controlling for relevant demographic and attitudinal variables); Robert L. Young, *Race, Conceptions of Crime and Justice, and Support for the Death Penalty*, 54 *Social Psychology Quarterly* 67 (1991) (empirical analysis finding that racial prejudice significantly predicts both support for the death penalty and tougher crime control policies).

120. *McCleskey*, 481 U.S. at 325 n.2 (Brennan, J., dissenting).

121. § 210.6(3)(e).

atrocious or cruel, manifesting exceptional depravity.”<sup>122</sup> One reading of the MPC provision is that it excludes only those murders of “ordinary” heinousness, atrociousness, cruelty, or depravity, and prosecutors and especially jurors might be reluctant to deem any intentional deprivation of human life as “ordinary” along those dimensions.

The failure to achieve genuine narrowing is partly a matter of political will in light of the constant political pressure to expand rather than restrict death eligibility in response to high-profile offenses (consider the expansion of the death penalty for the crime of the rape of a child). But the failure also stems from the deeper problem identified by Justice Harlan (discussed above), that it remains an elusive task to specify the “worst of the worst” murders in advance. Any rule-like approach to narrowing death eligibility will require jettisoning factors such as MPC’s “especially heinous” provision; but those factors often capture prevailing moral commitments – some offenses are appropriately regarded as among the very worst by virtue of their atrociousness, cruelty, or exceptional depravity. At the same time, many objective factors taken in isolation seem appropriately narrow (such as MPC § 210.6(3)(c), the commission of an additional murder at the time of the offense), but collectively these factors establish a broad net of death eligibility. The breadth of death eligibility in turn invites and requires substantial discretion, particularly in prosecutorial charging decisions, which permits racial considerations to infect the process.

The prospect of a meaningful legislative remedy to address race discrimination seems quite remote. After *McCleskey*, legislative energies were directed toward fashioning a response to the discrimination reflected in the Baldus study. At the federal level, the Racial Justice Act, which would have permitted courts to consider statistical data as evidence in support of a claim of race discrimination within a particular jurisdiction, repeatedly failed to find support in the U.S. Senate. Many state legislatures have considered similar legislation (including Georgia, Illinois, and North Carolina), but to date only Kentucky has enacted such a provision. The Kentucky provision, like the failed federal bill, allows a defendant to use statistical data to establish racial bias in the decision to seek death, though the question remains whether racial bias likely contributed to the decision to seek death *in the defendant’s case*.<sup>123</sup> To date, no death-sentenced inmate in Kentucky or elsewhere has had his death sentence reversed on such grounds.

Apart from its lack of political appeal, racial justice legislation seems inadequately suited to address the problems reflected in the empirical data.

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122. § 210.6(3)(h).

123. The Kentucky provision states: “No person shall be subject to or given a sentence of death that was sought on the basis of race. . . . A finding that race was the basis of the decision to seek a death sentence may be established if the court finds that race was a significant factor in decisions to seek the sentence of death in the Commonwealth at the time the death sentence was sought.” Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 252.3 (2001).

On a practical level, the numerous variables involved in particular cases make it difficult to demonstrate racial motivation or bias at the individual level, even if such discrimination is evident in the jurisdiction as a whole. Introducing evidence of system-wide bias might cause a court to look more closely at the facts surrounding a particular prosecution (especially with a burden-shifting provision), but the sheer “thickness” of the facts in a particular prosecution will likely permit courts to find inadequate proof of bias in case after case. Indeed, racial justice legislation risks legitimating capital systems that are demonstrably discriminatory by ostensibly providing a remedy when in fact none is forthcoming. More broadly, the litigation focus of racial justice acts fails to address the underlying problems. Many of the most troublesome cases in which race influenced prosecutorial or jury decisionmaking are those in which no death sentence was sought or obtained because of the minority status of the victim. Courts are (appropriately) powerless to compel decisionmakers to produce death sentences in such cases, and the troubling differential treatment is irremediable. Notwithstanding their increased political participation generally, minorities remain significantly underrepresented in the two roles that might make a difference: as capital jurors<sup>124</sup> and as elected district attorneys.<sup>125</sup> The combined influences of discretion, underrepresentation, historical practice, and conscious or unconscious bias, make it extraordinarily difficult to disentangle race from the administration of the American death penalty.

#### IV. Jury Confusion

Another significant post-*Furman* effort to solve the problem of arbitrariness and discrimination has been to impose structure and order on the ultimate life-death decision. The universal adoption of bifurcated proceedings – with a punishment phase focused solely on whether the defendant deserves to die – was embraced in hopes of producing reasoned moral decisions rather than impulsive, arbitrary, or discriminatory ones. In this respect, the post-*Furman* experiment has been focused on rationalizing the death sentencing process through a combination of statutory precision and focused jury instructions. Such provisions would precisely enumerate relevant aggravating and mitigating factors and carefully explain burdens of proof, the role of mitigation, inappropriate bases for decision (e.g., “mere sympathy”), and the process for reaching a final decision.

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124. Empirical research has found a strong association between life verdicts and the presence of at least one African-American male on the jury in capital cases involving African-American defendants and white victims. William J. Bowers, et al., *Death Sentencing in Black and White: An Empirical Analysis of the Role of Jurors' Race and Jury Racial Composition*, 3 U. Pa. J. Const. L. 171, 192 Table 1 (2001) (asserting “black male presence effects”).

125. See Jeffrey Pokorak, *Probing the Capital Prosecutor's Perspective: Race and Gender of the Discretionary Actors*, 83 Cornell L. Rev. 1811 (1998) (discussing significance of underrepresentation of racial minorities as District Attorneys).

As noted above, the *constitutional* requirements respecting states' efforts to channel sentencer discretion are quite minimal. Indeed, once states have ostensibly "narrowed" the class of death-eligible defendants via aggravating circumstances, states need not provide any additional guidance to sentencers as they make their life-or-death decision.<sup>126</sup> The central question as a matter of policy and practice is whether the post-*Furman* experiment with guided discretion has resulted in improved and more principled decisionmaking. The available empirical evidence – largely developed by the Capital Jury Project (CJP) – is discouraging along these lines.

Over the past eighteen years, the CJP has collected data from over a thousand jurors who served in capital cases with the goal of understanding the decision-making process in capital cases. CJP interviewers spent hours with individual jurors exploring the factors contributing to their decisions and their comprehension of the capital instructions in their cases. The CJP designed its questions to determine whether the intricate state capital schemes adopted post-*Furman* actually reduce arbitrariness in capital sentencing by controlling sentence discretion. Dozens of scholarly articles have been published based on the CJP data, and much of the research has documented the failure of jurors to understand the guidance embodied in the sentencing instructions and verdict forms they receive.<sup>127</sup> By collecting data from numerous jurisdictions (fourteen states), the CJP project has been able to identify not only idiosyncratic defects in particular state statutes but endemic flaws in jury decisionmaking, such as the propensity of jurors to decide punishment during the guilt-innocence phase of the trial,<sup>128</sup> their frequent misapprehension of the standards governing their consideration of mitigating evidence,<sup>129</sup> and their general moral disengagement from the death penalty decision.<sup>130</sup> Jurors tend to misunderstand the consequences of a life-without-possibility-of-parole verdict, and, in jurisdictions that permit the alternative of a life-with-parole verdict, jurors consistently underestimate the

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126. See, e.g., *Zant v. Stephens*, 462 U.S. 862 (1983).

127. See, e.g., Ursula Bentele & William J. Bowers, *How Jurors Decide on Death: Guilt is Overwhelming: Aggravation Requires Death; and Mitigation is No Excuse*, 66 Brooklyn L. Rev. 1011 (2001); William J. Bowers & Benjamin D. Steiner, *Death by Default: An Empirical Demonstration of False and Forced Choices in Capital Sentencing*, 77 Tex. L. Rev. 605 (1999); William J. Bowers, Marla Sandys, & Benjamin D. Steiner, *Foreclosed Impartiality in Capital Sentencing: Jurors' Predispositions, Guilt-Trial Experience, and Premature Decision Making*, 83 Cornell L. Rev. 1476 (1998); Theodore Eisenberg & Martin T. Wells, *Deadly Confusion: Juror Instructions in Capital Cases*, 79 Cornell L. Rev. 1 (1993).

128. See, e.g., William J. Bowers, *The Capital Jury Project: Rationale, Design, and Preview of Early Findings*, 70 Ind. L. J. 1043, 1089-90 (1995).

129. See, e.g., Bentele & Bowers, *supra* note 127, at 1041 (suggesting that mitigating evidence plays a "disturbingly minor role" in jurors' deliberations in capital cases across jurisdictions).

130. See, e.g., Craig Haney, *Violence and the Capital Jury: Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement and the Impulse to Condemn to Death*, 49 Stan. L. Rev. 1447 (1997) (describing how prevailing capital sentencing practices assist jurors in overcoming their resistance to imposing the death penalty in part by diminishing their sense of responsibility for their verdict).



length of time a defendant will remain in prison if not sentenced to death.<sup>131</sup> A significant number of jurors serve in capital cases notwithstanding their unwillingness to consider a life verdict,<sup>132</sup> and many jurors who have served on capital trials simply are unable to grasp the concept of mitigating evidence.<sup>133</sup> Other findings of the CJP point to the skewing of capital juries through death-qualification,<sup>134</sup> the significance of the racial composition of the jury in capital decisionmaking,<sup>135</sup> and the particular problems posed in jurisdictions (such as Florida and Alabama) where juries and judges share responsibility for capital verdicts.<sup>136</sup>

The empirical findings of the CJP are disheartening because they reflect widespread, fundamental misunderstanding on the part of capital jurors. Perhaps some of the findings can be discounted by the fact that the jurors' explanations of their role and the governing law were offered well after their actual jury service (and perhaps the jurors' understanding of their sentencing instructions at the time of interviews did not correspond perfectly to their understanding of the instructions at the time of their deliberations). But even a superficial review of instructions given in capital cases today reveals the unnecessary technical complexity of prevailing practice.<sup>137</sup> Jurors are told about the role of aggravating factors, their ability (in many jurisdictions) to consider non-statutory aggravators, the role of mitigation, and so on. They are then asked to weigh or balance aggravation against mitigation or to decide whether mitigating factors are sufficiently substantial to call for a sentence less than death.

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131. John H. Blume, et al., *Lessons from the Capital Jury Project*, in *Beyond Repair? America's Death Penalty* 167 (Stephen Garvey, ed. 2003); see also Theodore Eisenberg, et al., *The Deadly Paradox of Capital Jurors*, 74 S. Cal. L. Rev. 371 (2001) (discussing jurors' misperceptions about the meaning of life sentences).

132. Blume, et al., *supra* note 131, at 174.

133. Craig Haney, *Taking Capital Jurors Seriously*, 70 Ind. L.J. 1223, 1229 (1995) (reporting that "less than one-half of our subjects could provide even a partially correct definition of the term 'mitigation,' almost one-third provided definitions that bordered on being uninterpretable or incoherent, and slightly more than one subject in 10 was still so mystified by the concept that he or she was unable to venture a guess about its meaning") (citing Craig Haney & Mona Lynch, *Comprehending Life and Death Matters: A Preliminary Study of California's Capital Penalty Instructions*, 18 Law & Hum. Behav. 411, 420-21 (1994)).

134. See, e.g., Marla Sandys and Scott McClelland, *Stacking the Deck for Guilt and Death: The Failure of Death Qualification to Ensure Impartiality*, in *America's Experiment with Capital Punishment*, James Acker, et al., ed. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2003).

135. Bowers, et al., *supra* note 124.

136. Wanda D. Foglia and William J. Bowers, *Shared Sentencing Responsibility: How Hybrid Statutes Exacerbate the Shortcomings of Capital Jury Decision-Making*, 42 Crim. L. Bulletin 663 (2006).

137. In Alabama, for example, the allocation of burden regarding proof of mitigating circumstances is explained as follows: "[w]hen the factual existence of an offered mitigating circumstance is in dispute, the defendant shall have the burden of interjecting the issue, but once it is interjected the state shall have the burden of disproving the factual existence of that circumstance by a preponderance of the evidence." Ala. Code § 13A-5-45(g).

These sorts of efforts to tame the death penalty decision do not necessarily ensure more principled or less arbitrary decisionmaking. Casting the decision in terms of “aggravation” and “mitigation” and requiring jurors to “balance” or “weigh” these considerations might falsely convey to the jurors that their decision is a mechanical or mathematical one, rather than one requiring moral judgment. As one commentator lamented, “giv[ing] a ‘little’ guidance to a death penalty jury” poses the risk that “jurors [will] mistakenly conclude[] that they are getting a ‘lot’ of guidance” thus diminishing “their personal moral responsibility for the sentencing decision.”<sup>138</sup>

More fundamentally, the problem identified by Justice Harlan in *McGautha* casts a shadow over any effort to rationalize the decision whether to impose death. In many jurisdictions, jurors are permitted to consider both statutory and non-statutory aggravating factors (including victim impact evidence), making the grounds for their ultimate decision virtually limitless. At the same time, every jurisdiction – responding to the Supreme Court’s direction – currently permits unbridled consideration of mitigating factors, which likewise undercuts any effort to structure the death penalty decision. In the thirty-five or so years of constitutional regulation since *Furman*, states have reproduced the open-ended discretion of the pre-*Furman* era, but have packaged it in the guise of structure and guidance. In the absence of *substantive* limits on sentencer discretion, the complicated and confusing *procedural* means of implementing that discretion cannot reduce arbitrary or discriminatory decisionmaking. It can only obscure the jury’s current responsibility for deciding, essentially on any criteria, whether a defendant should live or die. In this respect, reform of contemporary capital statutes should focus on reducing complexity and communicating clearly the sentencer’s awesome obligation to make an irreducible moral judgment about the defendant’s fate. The states’ failure to make such reforms is largely attributable to their misguided belief that the complicated overlay of instructions is somehow constitutionally compelled. It is also partly attributable to the fact that such reform efforts – and the return to the pre-*Furman* world that they would represent – would amount to a concession that Justice Harlan was right: that statutory efforts (like the MPC death-sentencing provision) are likely unable to reduce the arbitrary imposition of the death penalty.

#### V. The Inadequacy of Resources, Especially Defense Counsel Services, in Capital Cases

Capital prosecutions are expensive. A number of studies have tried to ascertain the relative expense of capital prosecutions vis-a-vis non-capital

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138. Joseph L. Hoffman, *Where’s the Buck? Juror Misperception of Sentencing Responsibility in Death Penalty Cases*, 70 Ind. L.J. 1137, 1159 (1995).

prosecutions, using a variety of methodologies.<sup>139</sup> What emerges from these studies is a consensus that capital prosecutions generate higher costs at every stage of the proceedings, and that the total costs of processing capital cases are considerably greater than those of processing non-capital cases that result in sentences of life imprisonment (or other lengthy prison terms), even when the costs of incarceration are included. Although the data are often incomplete or difficult to disaggregate, it appears that the lion's share of additional expenses occur during the trial phase of capital litigation, as a result of a longer pre-trial period, a longer and more intensive voir dire process, longer trials, more time spent by more attorneys preparing cases, more investigative and expert services, and an expensive penalty phase trial that does not occur at all in non-death penalty cases. Appellate and especially post-conviction costs are also considerably greater than in non-capital cases, though they tend to make up a smaller share of the total expense of capital litigation.

Despite the very large costs that are currently incurred in the administration of capital punishment, there is also good reason to believe that the capital process remains substantially under-funded, especially in the area of defense counsel services. The best reference point for what constitutes minimally adequate defense counsel services in capital cases has been provided by the American Bar Association. The ABA's *Guidelines for the Appointment and Performance of Defense Counsel in Death Penalty Cases*, originally adopted in 1989 and revised in 2003, offer specific guidance on such matters as the number and qualifications of counsel necessary in capital cases, the nature of investigative and mitigation services necessary to the defense team, and the performance standards to which the defense team should be held. The *Guidelines* also instruct about the need for a "responsible agency" (such as a Public Defender organization or its equivalent) to recruit, certify, train and monitor capital defense counsel. In addition, there are separate Guidelines regarding the appropriate training for capital counsel, the need to control capital defense caseloads, and the need to ensure compensation at a level "commensurate with the provision of high quality legal representation."<sup>140</sup> The Supreme Court has repeatedly endorsed the ABA's performance standards for capital defense counsel as a key

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139. See, e.g., 2008 study of "The Cost of the Death Penalty in Maryland" by the Urban Institute; 2008 study of "The Hidden Death Tax: The Secret Costs of Seeking Execution in California," by the ACLU of Northern California; 2006 study by the Death Penalty Subcommittee of the Committee on Public Defense of the Washington State Bar Association (no title); 2004 study of "Tennessee's Death Penalty: Costs and Consequences," by Comptroller of the Treasury; 2003 Study of "Costs Incurred for Death Penalty Cases: A K-GOAL Audit of the Department of Corrections" by the Legislative Division of Post Audit, State of Kansas; 2003 "Study of the Imposition of the Death Penalty in Connecticut" by the Connecticut Commission on the Death Penalty; 2002 study of "The Application of Indiana's Capital Sentencing Law," by the Indiana Criminal Law Study Commission; 2001 "Case Study on State and County Costs Associated with Capital Adjudication in Arizona" by the Williams Institute.

140. Guideline 9.1B

benchmark for assessing the reasonableness of attorney performance in a series of recent cases addressing claims of ineffective assistance of counsel in capital cases.<sup>141</sup>

Nonetheless, it is obvious that the vast majority of states do not comply with the ABA *Guidelines*, and many do not come even close. In response to concerns about the lack of fairness and accuracy in the capital justice process, the ABA called in 1997 for a nationwide moratorium on executions until serious flaws in the system are identified and eliminated. In 2001, the ABA created the Death Penalty Moratorium Implementation Project, which in 2003 decided to examine several states' death penalty systems to determine the extent to which they achieve fairness and provide due process. Among other things, the Project specifically investigated the extent to which the states were in compliance with the ABA *Guidelines* for capital defense counsel services. The first set of assessments were published near the end of 2007, and the record of compliance with the ABA *Guidelines* was extremely low: of the 8 states studied,<sup>142</sup> not a single state was found to be fully "in compliance" with any aspect of the ABA *Guidelines* studied. For the 5 guidelines that were studied over the 8 states, there were 15 findings of complete noncompliance and 23 findings of only partial compliance (in 2 cases, there was insufficient information to make an assessment).

For example, the assessment described Alabama's indigent defense system as "failing" due to the lack of a statewide indigent defense commission, the minimal qualifications and lack of training of capital defense counsel, the failure to ensure the staffing required by the Guidelines (2 lawyers, an investigator, and a mitigation specialist), the failure to provide death-sentenced inmates with appointed counsel in state post-conviction proceedings, and the very low caps on compensation for defense services.<sup>143</sup> While Alabama had the worst record of compliance among the states studied, Indiana had the best record. Nonetheless, the Project found that Indiana, too, "falls far short of the requirements set out in the ABA *Guidelines*." In particular, the report pointed to inadequate attorney qualification and monitoring procedures, unacceptable workloads, insufficient case staffing, and lack of an independent appointing authority (such as a Public Defender office). Indiana is not alone in this latter failing, as fewer than 1/3 of the 36

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141. See *Williams*, 529 U.S. at 396 (citing ABA Standards for Criminal Justice); *Wiggins*, 539 U.S. 510 (citing 1989 ABA death penalty Guidelines); *Rompilla*, 545 U.S. 374 (citing 1989 and 2003 death penalty Guidelines).

142. The 8 states assessed by the ABA Moratorium Implementation Project were Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. The reports are available at <http://www.abanet.org/moratorium/>.

143. The caps for capital defense services in Alabama are \$2,000 for direct appeal, and \$1,000 for state post-conviction proceedings.

states that currently retain the death penalty have statewide capital defense systems as called for by the ABA.<sup>144</sup>

The 2003 revisions to the ABA *Guidelines* insist that the Guidelines are not “aspirational” but rather are the minimum necessary conditions for the operation of the capital justice process in a fashion that adequately guarantees fairness and due process. Unfortunately, the record of compliance with the Guidelines even among the states most committed to providing adequate defense services remains poor. New York, which provided for generous levels of capital defense funding when it reinstated capital punishment in 1995, slashed that allocation by almost a third three years later, and then maintained funding at the reduced rate until its capital statute was judicially invalidated in 2004.<sup>145</sup> When the New York State Assembly held hearings that year on whether to again reinstate the death penalty, experts warned that the invalidated statute failed to comply with the ABA *Guidelines* for the appointment of counsel in postconviction proceedings.<sup>146</sup> The record of state compliance with the *Guidelines* overall suggests that the states agree with the ABA that the *Guidelines* are not aspirational – not because the states believe that they are required, but rather because they simply do not aspire to meet them.

Failure to meet (or even to aspire to meet) the ABA *Guidelines* should not necessarily be written off as simple intransigence. The costs involved in providing the resources necessary for a minimally fair capital justice process can be staggering. Instructive in this regard is the Brian Nichols prosecution in Atlanta. Nichols was charged in a 54-count indictment for an infamous courthouse shooting and escape that killed a judge, a court reporter, a sheriff’s deputy, and a federal agent. In the investigative stage of the case, Nichols’ appointed counsel quickly generated costs totaling \$1.2 million, wiping out Georgia’s entire indigent defense budget and requiring the postponement of the trial.<sup>147</sup> Note that this price tag covered only the early investigative costs and did not include the costs of Nichols’ trial or the years of appellate and post-conviction costs that will follow if a death sentence is imposed (note: Nichols has been convicted and the sentencing phase is ongoing as of this writing, Nov. 20, 2008). The provision of the resources necessary for fair capital trials and appeals may simply not be possible, or at least not possible without substantial diversion of public funds from other sources – something state legislatures have shown themselves again and again unwilling to do in the context of providing indigent defense services. Moreover, when excellent defense services are provided to capital defendants

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144. See Shaila Dewan, *Executions Resume, as Do Questions of Fairness*, N.Y. Times, May 7, 2008.

145. James R. Acker, *Be Careful What You Ask For: Lessons from New York’s Recent Experience with Capital Punishment*, 32 Vermont L. Rev. 683, 752 (2008).

146. *Id.*

147. See Shaila Dewan & Brenda Goodman, *Capital Cases Stalling as Costs Grow Daunting*, N.Y. Times, Nov. 4, 2007.

at every stage of the criminal process, the process may become endlessly protracted. As Frank Zimring has most aptly observed, “A nation can have full and fair criminal procedures, or it can have [a] regularly functioning process of executing prisoners; but the evidence suggests it cannot have both.”<sup>148</sup>

The ABA’s Moratorium Implementation Project should sound two significant cautionary notes for the ALI. First, the ABA has already done the important work of promulgating norms and standards for the capital justice process. After a great deal of study, reflection, and consultation with experts, the ABA has made comprehensive and sensible recommendations for the reform of capital sentencing proceedings, and there seems little that an ALI study could usefully add. Second, even if the ALI came up with different or additional reform proposals, the lack of resources or the political will to generate the necessary resources stands in the way of any substantial reform of the capital justice process. The widespread failures to adequately fund defense counsel services, which are foundational for the implementation of most other reforms, should make the ALI dubious of the prospects for success of a large-scale law reform project in this area.

#### VI. Erroneous Conviction of the Innocent

Although there is debate about what constitutes a full “exoneration,” it is beyond question that public confidence in the death penalty has been shaken in recent years by the number of people who have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence. The Death Penalty Information Center, an anti-death penalty organization, keeps a list of exonerated capital defendants that now totals 129 for the years since 1973.<sup>149</sup> While it is difficult to extrapolate from the number of known exonerations to the “real” rate of wrongful convictions in capital cases (for the same reason that it is difficult to extrapolate from the number of professional athletes who test positive for steroids to the rate of steroid use among athletes), reasonable estimates range from 2.3% to 5%.<sup>150</sup>

Because exonerations of death-sentenced prisoners are such dramatic events, they have generated extensive study of the causes of wrongful convictions, in capital cases and more generally. There is widespread

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148. Franklin E. Zimring, *Postscript: The Peculiar Present of American Capital Punishment*, in Stephen P. Garvey, ed., *Beyond Repair? America’s Death Penalty* 228 (2003).

149. For inclusion on DPIC’s innocence list, a defendant must have been convicted and sentenced to death, and subsequently either: a) their conviction was overturned AND i) they were acquitted at retrial or ii) all charges were dropped; or b) they were given an absolute pardon by the governor based on new evidence of innocence. See <http://deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/70>.

150. See Samuel R. Gross & Barbara O’Brien, *Frequency and Predictors of False Conviction: Why We Know So Little, and New Data on Capital Cases* (forthcoming 2008 J. Empirical Legal Stud.); Samuel R. Gross, *Convicting the Innocent* (forthcoming 2008 Ann. Rev. L. & Soc. Sci.); D. Michael Risinger, *Innocents Convicted: An Empirically Justified Factual Wrongful Conviction Rate* 97 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 761 (2007).

consensus about the primary contributors to wrongful convictions: eyewitness misidentification; false confessions; perjured testimony by jailhouse informants; unreliable scientific evidence; suppression of exculpatory evidence; and inadequate lawyering by the defense.<sup>151</sup> Professor Samuel Gross of Michigan has studied wrongful convictions in both capital and non-capital cases, and he has made a convincing case that erroneous convictions occur disproportionately in capital cases because of special circumstances that affect the investigation and prosecution of capital murder. These circumstances include pressure on the police to clear homicides, the absence of live witnesses in homicide cases, greater incentives for the real killers and others to offer perjured testimony, greater use of coercive or manipulative interrogation techniques, greater publicity and public outrage around capital trials, the “death qualification” of capital juries which makes such juries more likely to convict, greater willingness by defense counsel to compromise the guilt phase to avoid death during the sentencing phase, and the lessening of the perceived burden of proof because of the heinousness of the offense.<sup>152</sup>

In light of the well-known causes of wrongful convictions and the great public concern that exonerations generate, especially in capital cases, one might expect that this would be an area in which remedies should be relatively easy to formulate and achieve without much resistance in the judicial or legislative arenas. In fact, remedies have proven remarkably elusive, despite the clarity of the issues and degree of public sympathy. First, it did not prove easy for those who were eventually exonerated by DNA to get access to DNA evidence or to get relief even *after* the DNA evidence excluded them as the perpetrators of the crimes for which they were convicted. A recent study of the first 200 people exonerated by post-conviction DNA testing revealed that approximately half of them were refused access to DNA testing by law enforcement, often necessitating a court order. After being exonerated by DNA evidence, 41 of the 200 required a pardon, usually because they lacked any judicial forum for relief, and at least 12 who made it into a judicial forum were denied relief from the courts despite their favorable DNA evidence.<sup>153</sup>

Second, these early difficulties cannot be written off as preliminary kinks that have been worked out of the system. While the vast majority of states have now passed legislation requiring greater preservation of and access to DNA evidence, the ABA Moratorium Implementation Project’s recent assessment of 8 death penalty states included an assessment of how well these states were complying with the ABA’s recommendations

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151. The Innocence Project at Cardozo Law School tracks the causes of wrongful conviction in cases of DNA exonerations. See <http://www.innocenceproject.org/understand/>.

152. See Samuel R. Gross, *The Risks of Death: Why Erroneous Convictions Are Common in Capital Cases*, 44 *Buff. L. Rev.* 469 (1996).

153. See Brandon L. Garrett, *Judging Innocence*, 108 *Colum. L. Rev.* 55 (2008).

regarding preservation of and access to biological evidence, and the provision of written procedures, training and disciplinary procedures for investigative personnel. As in the context of the provision of defense counsel services, findings of complete non-compliance or only partial compliance with the ABA's recommendations were commonplace, while full compliance was rare. Similar resistance can be found to implementing reforms aimed at preventing some of the most common causes of wrongful conviction, such as videotaping police interrogations to prevent false confessions, changing photo identification procedures to avoid misidentification, subjecting jailhouse snitch testimony to greater pretrial scrutiny, and performing external independent audits of crime labs. Resistance to providing adequate funding for capital defense services has already been documented above,<sup>154</sup> and the failure of defense lawyers to challenge misidentifications, false confessions, and unreliable scientific evidence has been an important element in the generation of wrongful convictions.

This resistance has a variety of causes. Some law enforcement groups resist changes in investigative procedures with which they have been comfortable, such as interrogations and identification procedures. Moreover, they may oppose proposals for greater monitoring and disciplining of investigative personnel because they fear that misunderstandings may lead to misuse of such procedures. Some reforms are expensive, such as investing in the infrastructure for reliable preservation of biological material, while others promise to be too open-ended in the resources that they might require, such as improving defense counsel services.

Once again, as in the provision of adequate defense counsel services, there is not very much question about the general types of improvements that would be helpful in reducing wrongful convictions; rather, there appears to be an absence of political will to implement them (or to do so in an expeditious fashion). Moreover, a number of the factors catalogued by Samuel Gross that render capital prosecutions more prone to error are simply inherent in the nature of capital crimes and not obviously subject to amelioration by changing the capital justice process. These circumstances militate against the undertaking of a reform project by the ALI and support the suggestion that the ALI instead call for the rejection of capital punishment as a penal option.

## VII. Inadequate Enforcement of Federal Rights

The preceding sections discuss the limits of constitutional regulation of the death penalty to counter many of the institutional and structural challenges of the American death penalty. Some of the challenges are simply beyond the reach of courts and "law," such as the difficulties described above in guiding sentencer discretion and combating the influence of race in

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154. See discussion in "Resources" section, *supra* at 34-37.



discretionary decisionmaking; other institutional problems, such as the inadequate level of resources at capital trials and the failure to safeguard against wrongful convictions, require the involvement and leadership of political branches. The constitutional edifice that remains secures only limited benefits, and, regrettably, those limited benefits are frequently undermined by inadequate enforcement mechanisms, particularly the stringent limitations on the availability of federal habeas review of state capital convictions.

Over the past three decades, coinciding with the Court's inauguration of constitutional regulation of the death penalty, the availability of federal habeas review has been sharply curtailed. The initial limitations were Court-crafted, but they were followed by the most significant statutory revision of federal habeas in American history, the adoption of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA). The net effect of these judicial and statutory refinements has been to dilute the limited constitutional protections that the Court has developed.

The case for strong federal habeas review of state criminal convictions is rooted in experience. During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, state trial courts, especially in the South, often made little pretense of ensuring basic fairness, and state appellate courts appeared more than willing to ratify those truncated proceedings. After the infamous denial of habeas relief to Leo Frank,<sup>155</sup> whose mob-dominated murder trial led to his death sentence despite his likely innocence, the Court granted habeas relief to five African Americans who had been convicted of murder and sentenced to death following a race riot in Arkansas.<sup>156</sup> The Arkansas case illustrated the potential for state hostility to federal rights: the five defendants were represented by a single lawyer who never consulted with them, and the forty-five minute trial before an all-white jury, in front of an angry white mob, included no defense motions, witnesses, or defendant testimony.<sup>157</sup> As the Court extended most of the constitutional criminal protections in the Bill of Rights to state criminal defendants in the 1950s and 1960s, the Court adjusted the scope of federal habeas as well. Perceived state court hostility to federal constitutional protections, especially those rights newly-recognized and extended to state proceedings, led the Court to expand the federal habeas forum and to relax procedural barriers to federal review of federal claims.

Beginning in the 1970s, though, the availability of federal habeas review was significantly limited. Most importantly, the Court tightened the federal enforcement of defaults imposed in state court, so that the failure of state inmates to preserve federal claims within state court forecloses later consideration of those claims in federal court as well – with extremely

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155. *Frank v. Mangum*, 237 U.S. 309 (1915).

156. *Moore v. Dempsey*, 261 U.S. 86 (1923).

157. Larry W. Yackle, *Capital Punishment, Federal Courts, and the Writ of Habeas Corpus*, in *Beyond Repair? America's Death Penalty* 65 (Stephen Garvey, ed. 2003).

narrow exceptions.<sup>158</sup> Strict enforcement of state procedural default rules has significantly limited the effectiveness of the federal forum. Indeed, some courts have even applied stringent default rules against fundamental claims of excessive punishment – including the prohibition against executing persons with mental retardation.<sup>159</sup> The enforcement of procedural defaults in this context means, as a practical matter, that the execution of all persons with mental retardation is not constitutionally prohibited; the prohibition extends only to those persons with mental retardation who have successfully navigated state procedural rules and preserved their claim for state or federal review. In this respect, limitations on the availability of federal habeas review promote misconceptions about prevailing capital practices; the public is likely to believe that the Court’s decisions announcing absolute prohibitions – such as the *Atkins* exemption – effectively end the challenged executions, whereas the reality is more qualified and complicated.

The near blanket prohibition against litigating claims defaulted in state proceedings encourages state courts to resolve claims on procedural grounds, and state courts have occasionally imposed defaults opportunistically to deny enforcement of the federal right. Moreover, strict enforcement of defaults in federal courts is particularly troublesome in cases involving claims defaulted on state postconviction review (typically claims alleging ineffective assistance of counsel at trial or prosecutorial misconduct). As noted above, because state inmates have no constitutional right to counsel on state habeas, they have no right to *effective* assistance of counsel in that forum. Ordinarily, in cases involving attorney error at trial, the one avenue for reviving a procedural defaulted claim is for the inmate to demonstrate that he had been denied constitutionally adequate representation; but if the attorney error occurs on state habeas, the inmate is held to his attorney’s mistakes and cannot seek relief under the Sixth Amendment. Given the inadequate resources and monitoring of state postconviction counsel, it is not uncommon for death-sentenced inmates to forfeit substantial claims on state habeas, and the current regime of federal habeas review permanently forecloses consideration of such claims. The strict enforcement of procedural defaults ensures that many death-sentenced inmates will be executed notwithstanding constitutional error in their cases.

The Court has also crafted limitations on the ability of inmates to benefit from “new” law on federal habeas. The Court’s nonretroactivity doctrine, set forth in *Teague v. Lane*,<sup>160</sup> is ostensibly designed to prevent excessive dislocation whenever the Court identifies a new constitutional rule; its roots are traceable to the Warren Court era, when the Court’s vast expansion of constitutional criminal procedure threatened to throw open the

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158. See *Murray v. Carrier*, 477 U.S. 478 (1986); *Wainwright v. Sykes*, 433 U.S. 72 (1977).

159. See, e.g., *Hedrick v. True*, 443 F.3d 342 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2006) (defaulting defendant’s claim of ineligibility for the death penalty based on mental retardation).

160. 489 U.S. 288 (1989).

jailhouse doors. But in its more recent incarnation, the nonretroactivity doctrine has blocked retroactive application of many decisions far less dramatic or path-breaking than the Warren Court rulings which had given rise to the doctrine. The Supreme Court, as well as lower federal courts, have rejected as impermissibly “novel” claims that are barely distinguishable from previously decided cases.<sup>161</sup> Apart from generating extraordinary time-consuming and complex litigation, *Teague* has thwarted the development and evolution of constitutional principles surrounding the administration of capital punishment. Federal habeas courts are discouraged from modestly extending or refining established precedents, so all constitutional realignment must come from the Supreme Court itself (on direct review of state criminal convictions). This institutional arrangement is a built-in headwind against adaptation to changing circumstances, and given the Eighth Amendment’s focus on “evolving standards of decency,” the *Teague* doctrine is at cross-purposes with the underlying substantive law of the death penalty.

The most significant reform of federal habeas is embodied in AEDPA’s unprecedented limitations on the availability and scope of federal review. AEDPA imposes a strict statute of limitations for filing in federal court,<sup>162</sup> stringent limitations on successive petitions,<sup>163</sup> and restrictions on the availability of evidentiary hearings to develop facts relating to an inmate’s underlying claims.<sup>164</sup> These procedural barriers have proven formidable, and many inmates have lost their opportunity for federal review of their federal claims on these grounds. The most far-reaching of AEDPA’s provisions, though, has been the elimination of *de novo* review for federal claims addressed on their merits in state court. In its place, AEDPA requires, as a condition for relief, that the state court adjudication “resulted in a decision that was contrary to, or involved an unreasonable application of, clearly established Federal law, as determined by the Supreme Court of the United States.”<sup>165</sup> This statutory revision essentially requires federal courts to defer to wrong but “reasonable” decisions by state courts. It insulates from review all decisions but those that demonstrably flout established rules. In many areas of constitutional doctrine, this “reasonableness” standard of review amounts to “double deference” on federal habeas. Numerous constitutional doctrines, including the Court’s standards for reviewing the effectiveness of counsel or a prosecutor’s alleged discriminatory use of peremptory challenges, already require deferential review of the underlying conduct; state courts are not expected to grant relief unless trial counsel’s performance

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161. *See, e.g.*, *Butler v. McKellar*, 494 U.S. 407 (1990) (holding that the rule prohibiting police-initiated interrogation concerning a separate offense in the absence of counsel, *Arizona v. Roberson*, 486 U.S. 675 (1988), was novel notwithstanding an earlier decision that had addressed a virtually identical Fifth Amendment violation, *Edwards v. Arizona*, 451 U.S. 477 (1981)).

162. 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d)(1).

163. 28 U.S.C. § 2244(b).

164. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(e)(2).

165. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d)(1).

wildly departed from established norms or a prosecutor's race-neutral explanation defies belief. When these cases get to federal habeas, AEDPA imposes an *additional* level of deference. For Sixth Amendment claims concerning the right to effective counsel, the question is not whether trial counsel's performance was unreasonably deficient – it is whether the state court's determination of reasonableness was *itself* unreasonable. This relaxation of federal review of state decisionmaking essentially insulates all but the most egregious denials of rights in state court.

AEDPA's significance in curtailing federal enforcement of federal rights is reflected in the substantial decline in habeas relief since AEDPA's enactment.<sup>166</sup> It is also reflected in numerous federal habeas decisions that explicitly recognize that relief might be required under de novo review. For example, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals recently reversed a District Court grant of relief on a claim of impermissible judicial bias.<sup>167</sup> The state court judge, at petitioner's capital trial, had indicated in open court that he was "doing God's work to see that [Petitioner] gets executed;" the judge also taped a postcard to the bench depicting the infamous "hanging judge" Roy Bean, altering it to include his own name and self-bestowed moniker, "The Law West of the Pedernales;" and the judge engaged in extensive ex parte contacts with the prosecution, threatened to remove petitioner's attorneys, and laughed out loud during the defense presentation of mitigating evidence at the punishment phase. The panel opinion recognized that such conduct might require relief under de novo review, but reversed the District Court because it could not find the state court's rejection of the bias claim unreasonable.<sup>168</sup> AEDPA's mandated deference, which ratifies unconstitutionally obtained death-sentences absent gross negligence on the part of the state court, removes the strongest incentive for state courts to toe the constitutional mark and allows executions to go forward despite acknowledged constitutional error.

Unlike several of the institutional and structural obstacles to the fair and accurate implementation of the death penalty described above, the scope of federal habeas is subject to legislative and judicial revision. But it seems unlikely that meaningful reform or restoration of federal habeas will be forthcoming. The politicization of criminal justice issues makes it extraordinarily difficult to expand review, and all of the pressures run in the other direction. In the absence of reform, though, the Court's minimalist constitutional regulation becomes virtually irrelevant; though enormous resources are expended in federal habeas, and the litigation results in delayed executions, most of the energies are directed toward overcoming procedural

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166. *See supra*, note 70.

167. *Buntion v. Quarterman*, 524 F.3d 664 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2008).

168. *Id.* at 67 ("Although we might decide this case differently if considering it on direct appeal, given our limited scope of review under AEDPA, we are limited to determining whether the state court's decision was objectively unreasonable.").

barriers rather than enforcing the underlying substantive rights of death-sentenced inmates.<sup>169</sup> Despite the articulation of many constitutional protections, the enforcement is relegated to state courts, and at least some of those courts, particularly in active executing states, are notably unsympathetic to the Court's regulatory efforts. Indeed, in a Texas case recently twice reversed by the Court, Texas judges repeatedly voiced their prerogative to disagree with the Court's constitutional conclusion.<sup>170</sup>

The inadequacy of federal habeas review to enforce federal rights is lamentable in itself; but it also generates the same legitimation problem described above. Despite the Court's seeming regulation of the American death penalty via its declaration of substantive rights, the procedural mechanisms currently in place under-enforce those protections. Casual observers of the death penalty will likely regard the death sentences and executions that emerge from the current process to be the product of careful, extensive review by many courts. The reality, though, is much different. States have essentially the first and last opportunity to focus on the constitutional merits of inmates' claims. After that review, the many years of legal wrangling is primarily spent navigating the procedural maze and deferential forum that federal habeas has become. Thus, even if increased constitutional regulation of the death penalty could solve many of the deficiencies of the prevailing system, which appears unlikely, the inadequate mechanisms for enforcing that regulation would in any case undermine the effort.

#### VIII. The Death Penalty's Effect on the Administration of Criminal Justice

The preceding sections highlight the constitutional, institutional, and structural obstacles to the fair and accurate administration of the death penalty. But the problems with the American death penalty are not confined to the capital system. The current battles over the scope of the death penalty may have consequences for the broader American criminal justice scheme. In particular, the presence of the death penalty may tend to normalize and stabilize the extremely punitive sanctions prevailing on the non-capital side; the constitutional regulation of the death penalty – with its explicit death-is-

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169. Jordan Steiker, *Restructuring Post-Conviction Review of Federal Constitutional Claims Raised by State Prisoners: Confronting the New Face of Excessive Proceduralism*, 1998 U. Chi. L. Forum 315.

170. *Ex parte Smith*, 132 S.W.3d 407, 427 (Tex. Crim. App. 2004) (Hervey, J., concurring) (“[H]aving decided that no federal constitutional error occurred in this case, we may disagree with the United States Supreme Court that Texas jurors are incapable of remembering, understanding and giving effect to the straightforward and manageable ‘nullification’ instruction such as the one in this case.”) (summarily reversed in *Smith v. Texas*, 543 U.S. 37 (2004)); *Ex parte Smith*, 185 S.W.3d 455, 474 (Tex. Crim. App. 2006) (Hervey, J., concurring) (“[W]e are not bound by the view expressed in *Penry II* that Texas jurors are incapable of remembering, understanding and giving effect to the straightforward and manageable ‘nullification’ instruction such as the one in this case.”) (on remand from summary reversal) (reversed in *Smith v. Texas*, 127 S. Ct. 1686 (2007)).

different caveat – has further insulated non-capital practices from significant scrutiny; concerns about inefficiencies in the capital system – particularly delays between trial and sentence – have led to significant restrictions on the habeas rights of non-capital inmates; and the demands of the capital system drain resources from the non-capital defense system and the state and federal judiciaries more generally. A decision about the Institute's stance on capital punishment must take account of these spillover costs imposed by the current capital regime.

Capital punishment constitutes only a tiny part of the criminal justice system. Fewer than 50 people were executed and slightly over 100 people were sentenced to death nationwide in 2007, while considerably over two million people remain incarcerated in the non-capital criminal justice system. The death penalty does not even constitute a substantial part of our system for punishing *homicide*. In a country that has experienced between 15,000 and 20,000 homicides per year nationwide over the past decade, the number of capital sentences and executions last year looks particularly trivial. The relative paucity of death sentences and executions does not disappear if we focus on the high-water marks for death-sentencing and executions in the modern era, with highs for death sentences in the 300s (per year, nationwide) and executions hovering close to 100 (per year, nationwide).

At the same time, the non-capital system has experienced extraordinary growth. Over the past three decades, the country has embarked on an unprecedented experiment with mass incarceration. The jail and prison population of the United States has grown eight-fold over the past 35 years. In addition to imprisoning the most inmates in absolute terms worldwide, the United States also has an incarceration rate that is five to eight times higher than other Western industrialized nations; the United States has recently achieved the dubious distinction of imprisoning more than one out of every hundred of its adults. Much of the expansion of the prison population is attributable to more punitive sentencing regimes, especially for non-violent offenders. National spending on incarceration has reached unprecedented levels, with estimates that states and the federal government spend over \$65 billion annually to house the more than 2.3 million inmates held nationwide. Moreover, the rate of incarceration in minority populations is particularly high, with one in nine black males between the ages of 20 and 34 behind bars.

Despite the enormous social and political costs of our mass incarceration policies, reform efforts have been unable to reverse the remarkable trends. The presence of the death penalty, especially the recent focus on the possibility of executing innocents, might well undermine the prospects for non-capital reform. First, the very existence of the death penalty blunts arguments about the excessive punitiveness of non-capital sanctions. Indeed, death penalty opponents approvingly argue in *favor* of harsh incarceration sanctions (including life without parole) as a way of undermining support for the death penalty. In this respect, the death penalty

deflects arguments about the ways in which lengthy incarceration (and the absence of alternative sanctions) imposes substantial costs and undermines human dignity: lengthy incarceration is viewed as a “lesser” evil instead of as an evil in itself. Second, the innocence focus wrought by the death penalty and projected on to the rest of the criminal justice system tends to emphasize the *selection* of those to be incarcerated rather than on the normative underpinnings of our incarceration policy. Tinkering with the investigation and prosecution of crime will leave untouched the prevailing punitive framework. The one important link between wrongful convictions and excessive punitiveness is frequently missed in public and professional debate: the presence of extremely harsh sanctions encourages plea-bargaining, and when the plea-bargain discount is sufficiently high, excessive punishments encourage false confessions. But few advocates of reform have sought to attack the problem of wrongful convictions by reducing the harshness of our current sanctions. The focus on innocence in contemporary death penalty discourse also tends to legitimate and entrench the justice of harshly punishing the guilty. The more precariously-held values of fairness, non-discrimination, adequate representation, and procedural regularity are endangered by equating injustice with inaccuracy.

The death penalty’s deflection of policy-based criticisms of our extraordinarily punitive non-capital system is exacerbated by the Court’s highly-visible constitutional regulation of the death penalty. Over the past decade, the Court has issued three landmark decisions limiting the reach of the death penalty. Two of the decisions, *Atkins v. Virginia*<sup>171</sup> and *Roper v. Simmons*,<sup>172</sup> held that the death penalty was disproportionate as applied to particular offenders – juveniles and persons with mental retardation. The third decision, *Kennedy v. Louisiana*,<sup>173</sup> held that the death penalty was constitutionally disproportionate as applied to a particular offense – the rape of a child – though the Court’s reasoning was considerably broader, indicating that the death penalty is disproportionate as applied to any non-homicidal ordinary crime (distinguishing offenses against the State such as espionage and treason). Together, these decisions reflect a considerable broadening of the criteria available to discern evolving standards of decency, including evidence of elite, professional, and world opinion. Two of the cases – *Atkins* and *Simmons* – overruled relatively recent decisions, and, along with *Kennedy*, the decisions signal an unprecedented willingness of the Court to rein in capital practices deemed excessive.

But at the same time the Court has demonstrated a willingness to protect against disproportionate punishment on the capital side, it has wholly deferred to states in their imposition of harsh terms of incarceration. In between its pronouncements in *Atkins* and *Simmons*, the Court upheld the

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171. 536 U.S. 304 (2002).

172. 543 U.S. 551 (2005).

173. 128 S. Ct. 2641 (2008).

operation of California's "three-strikes-you're-out" law that resulted in a 25-years-to-life sentence for a repeat offender convicted of attempting to steal three golf clubs from a golf course pro shop.<sup>174</sup> In a choice of quotation that reveals just how difficult the non-capital proportionality test is meant to be, the Court reached back to repeat its observation from an earlier case that the proportionality principle might "come into play in the extreme example . . . if a legislature made overtime parking a felony punishable by life imprisonment."<sup>175</sup>

There may be strong institutional and practical reasons for providing robust proportionality review in capital cases while deferring to extremely punitive and rare non-capital sentences. But the death-is-different principle might contribute to a false sense of judicial oversight, especially in light of the enormous visibility and salience of the death penalty both within the United States as a symbol of crime policy and in the broader world as a symbol of American punitiveness. In this respect, the Court's capital jurisprudence offers a means to legitimate American penal policy by ameliorating some of its harshest aspects and portraying the Court as a counter-majoritarian scrutinizer of state penal policy, while leaving the fundamental pillars of America's true penal exceptionalism intact. The United States' status as the world's leading incarcerator remains untouched by the constitutional regulation of capital punishment, yet such regulation gets a disproportionate degree of attention because of the power of the death penalty as a symbol in numerous different arenas. As a result, constitutional regulation of capital punishment both obscures and normalizes the excesses of American penal policy. The problems of mass incarceration, racial disparities in punishment, and the endless war on drugs are obscured because they inevitably fall into the shadows when the spotlight of national and world attention are focused by the Court on highly dramatic issues regarding American death penalty practices. Moreover, extremely lengthy sentences are normalized by capital litigation: successful capital litigants, after all, are almost always "rewarded" with sentences of life without possibility of parole. Even the lengthiest sentences lose their horror when they are so avidly sought and so victoriously celebrated by the (rarely) successful capital litigant. In these ways, the narrow successes of capital litigants under the Eighth Amendment offer little comfort to and indeed likely limit the chances of successful challenges by the vastly larger group of non-capital litigants. Of course, a proponent of our severe non-capital policies would not find worrisome any reinforcement of such policies. But the many critics of our current trend toward mass incarceration should pay attention to the ways in

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174. *Ewing v. California*, 538 U.S. 11 (2003).

175. *Id.* at 21 (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting *Rummel v. Estelle*, 445 U.S. 263 (1980) (upholding a life sentence with possibility of parole for a repeat offender convicted of obtaining \$120.75 by false pretences)).



which the retention of capital punishment may entrench and legitimate that trend.

As noted above, concerns about the administration of the death penalty – particularly the length of time between the imposition of death sentences and executions – led to stringent procedural and substantive limits on the availability of federal habeas for state prisoners. Although the title of the legislation – the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act – suggests a purpose unrelated to the status of non-capital inmates, the restrictions were made to apply globally. In addition, many of the restrictions imposed by AEDPA – its one-year statute of limitations, its absolute ban on same-claim successive petitions, its higher bar for filing new-claim successive petitions, its onerous exhaustion provisions, and its restrictions on the availability of federal evidentiary hearings – actually impose special hardships on non-capital inmates; unlike those sentenced to death, indigent non-capital inmates have no statutory right to counsel in state or federal habeas proceedings. As difficult as it is for death-sentenced inmates to navigate AEDPA's procedural maze, the burdens on non-capital inmates are virtually insurmountable. The already low-rate of relief for non-capital inmates pre-AEDPA (1 in 100) has apparently dropped considerably post-AEDPA (1 in 341) according to a recent study.<sup>176</sup> Thus, concerns about the skewed incentives on the capital side – in which inmates have every reason to delay seeking relief in federal court – have generated restrictions for the vastly larger group of non-capital inmates whose incentives are quite different. More generally, this example illustrates the risk of capital litigation driving broader criminal justice policy, and the peculiar dynamic of a small subset of American prisoners framing the debate over the appropriate operation of larger institutional frameworks.

Although death penalty inmates are a small fraction of the overall prison population, the death penalty extracts a disproportionately large share of resources at every stage of the proceedings. As discussed above, capital trials are enormously more expensive than their non-capital counterparts, and the decision to pursue a capital sentence often has significant financial consequences for the local jurisdiction. Indigent defense is notoriously underfunded in both capital and non-capital cases, and the resources devoted to the capital side often come directly at the expense of the rest of the indigent defense budget. In this respect, death penalty prosecutions threaten to compromise an already over-burdened and under-funded indigent defense bar, in addition to imposing daunting costs on local prosecutors and their county budgets. The political pressures and high emotions in capital cases can sometimes overwhelm sober assessments. The famous Texas litigation involving John Paul Penry reflects this dynamic, as his three capital trials

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176. See Nancy J. King, Fred L. Cheesman II, & Brian J. Ostrom, *Habeas Litigation in U.S. District Courts: An empirical study of habeas corpus cases filed by state prisoners under the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996*, National Center for State Courts, Aug. 21, 2007, at p. 9.

generated millions in county expenses before he pled to a life sentence (after three reversals of his death sentences). Following the Supreme Court's invalidation of his first sentence, the local District Attorney declared to the press, "if I have to bankrupt this county, we're going to bow up and see that justice is served."<sup>177</sup> More recently, the Chair of the Florida Assessment Team for the ABA Death Penalty Moratorium Implementation Project reported that "all members of the Assessment Team, including those representing the state, were deeply worried that the expenditure of resources on capital cases significantly detracts from Florida's ability to render justice in *non-capital* cases."<sup>178</sup>

In addition to these financial costs, the death penalty places enormous burdens on state and federal judicial resources. In some states, such as California, the burdens imposed by capital cases on appellate courts compromise the ability of those courts to manage their competing commitments on the civil and non-capital side. The burdens imposed are not merely a function of the sheer time required for capital litigation; the frenetic, last-minute litigation in active executing states exacts its own toll on judges and court personnel and likely negatively affects the courts' fulfillment of their non-capital obligations. The possibility of even greater disruption along these lines looms with the increased likelihood that AEDPA's "opt-in" provisions<sup>179</sup> will become operative. Those provisions give fast-track status to death-sentenced inmates from states that create a system for the appointment and compensation of competent counsel in state postconviction. Under the opt-in provisions, once a state has satisfied the opt-in requirements, the state receives the benefit of a shorter statute of limitations for death-sentenced inmates filing in federal habeas (six months instead of one year) and the federal courts are under strict deadlines for ruling on claims, including the congressionally-imposed requirement that capital cases take priority over the rest of the federal docket. A literal reading of the opt-in provisions would require federal courts to halt on-going proceedings (trials, hearings, etc.) until capital habeas petitions are resolved ("The adjudication of any application under section 2254 that is subject to this chapter, and the adjudication of any motion under section 2255 by a person under sentence of death, shall be given priority by the district court and by the court of appeals over all noncapital matters."<sup>180</sup>). In this respect, the death penalty makes extraordinary demands on the American courts and threatens the quality of justice for all litigants, including those outside the capital process.

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177. Steve Brewer, *Penry likely to face retrial, officials say*, The Huntsville Item, Jul. 1, 1989, p.3A.

178. Christopher Slobogin, *The Death Penalty in Florida*, Vanderbilt University Law School Public Law and Legal Theory Working Paper 08-51 (November, 2008).

179. 28 U.S.C. § 2261.

180. 28 U.S.C. § 2266(a).

### Conclusion

The foregoing review of the unsuccessful efforts to constitutionally regulate the death penalty, the difficulties that continue to undermine its administration, and the structural and institutional obstacles to curing those ills forms the basis of our recommendation to the Institute. The longstanding recognition of these underlying defects in the capital justice process, the inability of extensive constitutional regulation to redress those defects, and the immense structural barriers to meaningful improvement all counsel strongly against the Institute's undertaking a law reform project on capital punishment, either in the form of a new draft of § 210.6 or a more extensive set of proposals. Rather, these conditions strongly suggest that the Institute recognize that the preconditions for an adequately administered regime of capital punishment do not currently exist and cannot reasonably be expected to be achieved.