



MEDIA ADVISORY

April 27, 2009

Panel Discussion: Ohio author and journalist, defense attorney, and sentencing expert discuss death penalty

Race, politics and the geography of Ohio's death penalty will be the topic of a panel discussion on Saturday, May 9, from 2–4 p.m. at the Moritz College of Law, Saxbe Auditorium, 55 W. 12th Ave., in Columbus. "Perspectives on Ohio's Death Penalty," which will examine this issue from various viewpoints, is hosted by The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University.

The panel of speakers will include:

- **Andrew Welsh-Huggins**, a reporter with the Associated Press in Columbus, Ohio, and author of *No Winners Here Tonight: Race Politics, and Geography in One of the Country's Busiest Death Penalty States* (Ohio University Press, 2009). Welsh-Huggins' book focuses on the history of the death penalty in Ohio, which is noted as having an active use of capital punishment. The book also explores the impact of race on Ohio court decisions.
- **Tim Young**, Director of the Office of the Ohio Public Defender. Young was appointed as Ohio Public Defender in January 2008, after serving as a Deputy Director of the Montgomery County Public Defender's Office. He is an alumnus of the University of Dayton School of Law.
- **Doug Berman**, William B. Saxbe Designated Professor at Moritz College of Law. During the 1999-2000 school year, Professor Berman received The Ohio State University Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching. He is the author of the prominent Sentencing Law and Policy blog. He attended Princeton University and Harvard Law School.

Andrew Grant-Thomas, Deputy Director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, will serve as moderator.

The death penalty continues to be one of the most contentious issues in the United States. Recently, New Mexico became the second state to abolish capital punishment since 2007 and the 15th state to abandon the practice, a decision that has resulted in strong reactions from proponents and opponents alike. The ongoing debate on this issue is especially relevant in Ohio, which has a long history with the death penalty and has carried out a total of 371 executions, 28 in the modern era. Ohio has exonerated five men from death row.

"A system meant to be fair turned out, contrary to lawmakers' expectations, to be subject to the same frailties as the rest of the criminal justice system – capricious, uneven, and dependent on the most nonjudicial of factors, human sentiment," says Andrew Welsh-Huggins. "In the case of the death penalty, of course, there is no way to resolve those disagreements once the sentence has been carried out. Right or wrong, all decisions are final."

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity was established in 2003 as a center for interdisciplinary research at The Ohio State University. The Kirwan Institute partners with people, communities, and institutions worldwide to think about, talk about, and act on race in ways that create and expand opportunity for all. For more information about the Kirwan Institute, go to: <http://kirwaninstitute.org/>.

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