



Jurors' Stories of Death: How America's Death Penalty Invests in Inequality (Law, Meaning, and Violence)

Benjamin Dov Fleury-Steiner

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"What is most extraordinary about Ben Fleury-Steiner's book is that it seeks to shed light on the 'black box' of capital jury deliberations. Based on a remarkable social science survey of persons who served on capital juries, this volume illuminates the workings of the most closely guarded secret in the criminal justice system."

-David Cole, from the Foreword

"Perhaps the most powerful, routinely enacted civic ritual in American public life is that of capital punishment. This state-sanctioned extirpation of human life in the collective pursuit of justice is a searing act of civic pedagogy, made legitimate only by the deliberative endorsement of a small group of ordinary citizens-the jury. In *Jurors' Stories of Death*, Benjamin Fleury-Steiner has taken a cold, hard look at how these ordinary citizens come to terms with their extraordinary role, and how they rationalize their irreversible decisions. The result is a chilling portrait of how we---that is, all of us Americans---constitute ourselves as a political community."

-Glenn Loury, Director, Institute on Race and Social Division

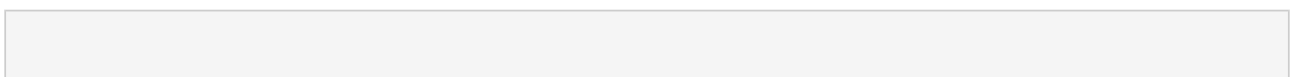
"This illuminating and insightful examination of jury deliberations makes a terrific contribution to the study of capital punishment. Fleury-Steiner's synthesis of sociological, legal and theoretical concepts with vivid juror narratives and statistical data, thoughtfully animates and details how race and class consciousness continue to shape America's death penalty."

---Bryan Stevenson, Professor of Clinical Law, NYU School of Law, Executive Director, Equal Justice Initiative of Alabama

Jurors' Stories of Death is more than just another book on the death penalty; it is the first systematic survey of how death penalty decisions are made.

Benjamin Fleury-Steiner draws on real-life accounts of white and black jurors in capital punishment trials to discuss the effect of race on the sentencing process. He finds that race is invariably a factor in sentencing, with jurors relying on accounts that deny the often marginalized defendants their individuality and complexity, while reinforcing the jurors' own identities as superior, moral, and law-abiding citizens-a system that punishes in the name of dominance. This biased story of "us versus them" continues to infuse political rhetoric on crime and punishment in the United States even today.

Jurors' Stories of Death concludes with an original argument for abolition of the death penalty: If America values multiculturalism and cultural diversity, it must do away with institutions such as state-sanctioned capital punishment in order to begin to free itself from the racism and classicism that so insidiously plague social relations today.



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