

# Voices From ALABAMA Death Row

"A Search for Justice"



I know you are asking today how long will it take. I come to say to you this afternoon, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to Earth shall rise again. How Long? Not long, because no lie can live forever. How Long? Not Long because you still reap what you sow. How Long? Not Long because the arm of moral universe is long but it bends toward Justice.

**Martin Luther King Jr.**

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As in the words of Dr Martin Luther King Jr, join us in our Fight for Freedom. Today!

# Donald Deardorff

My name is Donald Deardorff. I am a 46 year old white male. I am writing this in the hopes that my actions and participation with a group of fellow Death Row inmates will help the public to reach a better understanding of how Alabama's Capital Punishment system is designed.

My position from the start has been ACTUAL INNOCENCE. My case and conviction came before what I call the "CSI" era. For several years now, people have watched these crime drama shows where-- in an hour-- police solve crimes using science. Almost all the plots give the appearance of a clearly guilty person. Then in less than an hour some forensic tool proves the guilty person is the least likely connection. Sounds good but in real life nothing could be farther from the truth.

Most situation, real life, the first person law enforcement target IS the only person they focus on. Law enforcement, prosecutors, even judges are more concerned with solving a crime, getting that conviction ratio higher, telling the public how hard on crime they are, than making sure a person is really guilty.

Once charged with a capital crime, the cost of defending one's innocence is higher than what all but a select few could afford. So people are almost forced to accept the appointment of representation that the court chooses. In one recent study, a lawyer stated that he made approximately five dollars an hour after defending a Capital case. With Alabama having no set system, lawyers are often poorly trained on how to defend cases with such dire consequences. Yet law enforcement and District Attorney staff have an almost unlimited resource of training, many hold special seminars on how to actually get the Death Penalty.

Many times law enforcement and so called state experts testify about evidence recovered. As proven in 2006, when the FBI scrapped many of their own test procedures as faulty or possible prone to error, many lawyers don't know the minimum procedures. So false test results, false testimony are often placed in front of a jury.

One of the leading tools prosecutors use these days are jail house snitches; someone who's been given some type of reward for his testimony. Ask yourself, How could you combat this, convince a jury that person was lying? As long as they are willing to maintain that testimony, a defendant has no chance to dispute it. Wait, what if you had another jail

inmate who would testify that the snitch was lying. Someone who would swear under oath, just like the snitch did, that what he said was the truth? That the snitch was bragging he had a get out of jail free card, begging other inmates to say what he tells them to bolster his testimony. Would that do it? No, let me say it again, No. Not under Alabama Law. That would be called hearsay and the court would refuse to allow their testimony. Is that to be considered a fair system?

I am telling you now, here in print, there are dozens of other issues. Race does play into the conviction process. Wait, I am not just talking about black defendants. In my case, prospective black jurors were struck because in Alabama blacks typically vote for Life without Parole rather than Death. Blacks do encounter more police than the average white person. Call it profiling, social environments, or maybe blacks are just more aware of how their own race is treated. So during a Capital murder trial, when defense lawyers raise these issues of corrupt law enforcement, tainted or fabricated evidence; blacks pay closer attention because they believe it does still happen in today's time. That is why prosecutors prefer white jurors.

As I said, there are dozens of issues that could be raised as proof of our wrongful convictions. Don't believe me? Then I challenge you to look closer yourself. Contact me directly; I've had TEN YEARS here on Death Row to study it.

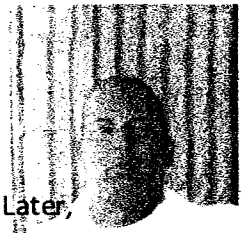
In closing, I'd like to say, I grew up in and around Baldwin County Alabama. I drove past the prisons, saw people out on the road during execution times. I just never gave it a second thought. It didn't affect me, why should I care? Today most people struggle to keep food on the table, a roof over their head. Times are hard. So why should you care about us? My only heartfelt answer is, If I am telling you this happened to me, to others here like me. Maybe tomorrow it could happen to you, or your father, your mother, your son or daughter. By the time, you began to pay attention; they might be here-- wrongfully convicted too.

You can always reach me here, I promise a quick reply to any letter. (see contact listing)

Thank you...

Donald Deardorff

# James A Johnson



My name is James Allen Johnson, I am 38 years old and am presently housed at Donaldson Correctional Facility in Bessemer, Alabama on Alabama's Death Row unit.

It is my hope in writing to acquire help fighting against an unjust justice system that has allowed for me, AN innocent man to be placed on Death Row.

It is my intention to offer you some of the facts surrounding this case that will interest you in assisting with help in a state that imposes the Death Penalty arbitrarily and corruptly.

## Factual Support Information

1. In 1996, I was charged with murder/robbery of Ms. Charlene Lawson who was a clerk at a BP Gas Station in Jasper, Alabama.
2. In 1999, I was convicted of murder/robbery of Ms. Lawson who was a young white female by an all white jury and sentenced to death on June 3, 1999.
3. I was represented by court appointed counsel who did not look at any of the alleged evidence. In fact, it was testified to by Lt. Gilbert Jean of the Jasper Police Dept. that counsel, Mr. Patrick Gustin told him that he did not have the time to look at any evidence and never returned to look at any evidence.
4. There was only one piece of physical evidence in this case. A 38 caliber revolver which was test fired by the Alabama Forensic Department and compared with bullets from the crime scene. The results were inconclusive.
5. The state's only "eye witness" gave three separate statements in which the first statement, taken the day of the crime because he was in the vicinity buying crack

cocaine was that he saw nothing. Later, after being arrested and placed in the Walker County Jail for a parole violation on a prior charge, he gave a statement that he saw Ira Norris and another black male. In this third statement, he said that he saw Ira Norris and upon being in jail he recognized the other black male as "James Johnson".

He said that he was positive in his identification of me because I had a "pitchfork tattoo" on my arms. In fact, this crime happened August 28, 1995 and Walker County jail booking and docketing records will show that the first time I was arrested on an unrelated charge was November 1995 and there was no tattoos listed. Walker County jail records for March 1996 will also show that there were no tattoos on my arms at all. This is a fact that my trial lawyer counsel could have produced to the jury if he had not been so ineffective.

## Conclusion

There are numerous other facts that show my innocence but they cannot be contained in a cover letter. I am not the only man who has received injustice in the state of Alabama. Nor am I the only person who is innocent that is sitting on Alabama's Death Row. I am one of MANY. We are not asking for mercy or compassion, what we are asking for is justice for us and our families, which has been so long denied.

Thank You  
James Johnson

(see Contact Listing)



# Willie D Minor

My name is Willie D Minor. I was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. A Tuscaloosa County Grand Jury convicted me for the murder of my two month old son, Ebious Jennings.

It is my belief that the main reason why I was arrested and charged with the death of my son was because I had a past record which I had already been to prison for. Also, the mother of my son had a family member on the Tuscaloosa police force as well as the County Sheriff Department. I, therefore, believe they had a major influence on her not being arrested or charged with my son's death.

I have been incarcerated since April, 1995 for a crime I did not commit and I have struggled for many years to receive justice. I do not expect you or no one else to rely on my word alone, I have medical evidence to prove the innocence claim that I am presenting to you. We are not receiving the justice we deserve in the Alabama Judicial system. In the Deep South, we are completely forgotten. Hopefully, I will be able to bring some national attention to this case and the entire justice system in Alabama.

I have dedicated lawyers that are representing me on appeal, and they believe in my innocence. I plan to protest this case in the near future and I will need support protesting the injustice I received.

I don't prefer to paly the "race card" but racism runs very deep in the south, and especially Alabama. With this said, we don't receive any support from the black communities. The local media constantly reports black on black crimes until the black people do not want to get involved. They are afraid of their own people, so they do not investigate or ask questions about any type of injustice that takes place in their state.

The printed news and other media play a major part in representing the arrest, conviction and sentencing of a person accused of committing a Capital Offense. However our press and other media delight in frightening "Model Citizens" with reports of crimes, until they influence people to be filled with revenge and hate. They only publicize what they believe will receive a more negative reaction from society. Then there are the types of people with these beliefs that our juries are selected from. SO how much more injustice can a man take?

The Alabama Supreme Court has no diversity, in fact it only has one Democrat and she has resigned effectively August 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. This shows you the true image of Alabama.

I have experienced injustice myself. I am a victim of murder as well as the justice system. During my initial months on Death Row, I remember the sleepless nights, the contemplation of suicide, the humiliation I felt with being charged and convicted of killing my own child because I have always protected and loved children.

People in society can make a difference by getting more involved and interested in our laws and how they are truly designed. When they see any form of injustice take place, stand up and speak out about it. Also, people hide behind the government, asking for closure and justice. Yet they become blinded to the outrageous behavior of some politicians and members of law enforcement. Get to know people in prison and on Death Row before you judge them. Don't believe everything you hear in the press or media, get more directly involved with cases.

People who never killed are receiving the Death Penalty, and some are being murdered by our government. In the past, many people have been executed and later evidence proved they were innocent of the crime. Today, innocent people are still on Death Row and will be murdered if justice doesn't prevail.

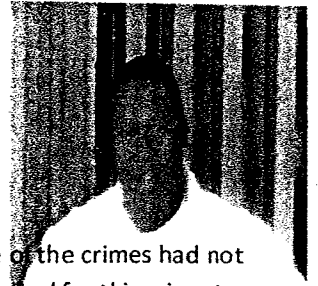
When a judge sentences someone to life without parole, it can be corrected if exonerating evidence emerges. But how can a judge correct an execution? Bottom Line: Killing is wrong, and the Death Penalty only continues the cycle of murder, pain and suffering.

The Death Penalty isn't all about racism, it is also about money. Politicians are getting paid, but we are the ones paying the cost, not only money-side but also with our families and their lives. Mrs. Coretta Scott King once said and I quote "We don't gain anything by taking one life for another. Justice is never served or advanced in the taking of a human life. An evil deed is not redeemed by an evil deed or retaliation and morality is never upheld by legalized murder."

If you or your loved ones have been a victim of murder or the Death Penalty, then my deepest sympathy goes out to you and your family.

In closing, I would like to again thank you for any consideration you may give to helping us receive justice here in Alabama. I welcome any contact you might offer and I can give you my attorneys of record information. I can be reached at... (see contact listing)

# Darryl D Turner



My name is Darryl D Turner. I am currently on death row in Bessemer Alabama. I am 37 years old and have been fighting for my freedom since 1996 because of the injustice that was handed down to me.

I was convicted of capital murder in Limestone County after spending 44 months in jail waiting to see if they would take me to trial. After a four day trial, (2-1/2 days) was picking a jury, they got a conviction based on lies, bogus evidence and without presenting one piece of evidence of murder and no defense.

Even when the district attorney forced me to go to trial just using their testing of the DNA evidence, and when their own expert admits there was no match in the case, the courts turned their head. Then on appeal, the State admitted there is no match, the Appeals Court turned their head. These are just a few examples of what we are up against in this system in Alabama.

The juror who stated that he had read about the case in the newspaper and he wanted everybody involved to receive the death penalty was appointed the jury foreman.

My two court appointed counsel asked for a postponement of my trial because they did not know we were having a trial and had not prepared any defense or witnesses and Judge Woodroof denied them.

The court used mixed samples DNA tests at trial but never gave defense any samples to test, nor allowed them to witness the tests and only let the defense DNA expert look at the test results a few hours before the trial begin and this was the "eye witness" evidence at the trial. Defense counsel argued for these tests not to be admissible for these reasons and Judge Woodroof denied them.

I was convicted with DNA from an unknown source, we have information regarding the unknown source but the courts will not hear it.

The coroner testified that one of the crimes had not been committed, the defense asked for this crime to be removed, but Judge Woodroof denied them.

The prosecutor presented evidence to show I was not at the crime scene when the murder happened, yet I was convicted because it DID happen.

The judge did not give me my right to have the jury recommend the sentence and he decided the sentence would be death penalty.

It was proven at my co-defendant's trial that he committed the murder and robbery, and the district attorney stated that I "aided and abetted" but the co-defendant only received a life sentence and has gone up for parole two times, while I received a severe punishment of Death Row for their "aiding and abetting" crime. This is harsh punishment.

This is why we have decided to try to get some help for ourselves and shed some light on this corrupt system in the South. It is not just for us because our families is doing the time with us and that is what keeps us fighting so hard because of them and to save our lives.

Any help that you could give us, no matter in what form, would be truly appreciated. It could be passing a word to someone about what you read that could end up in the right person's ears. Just lending some advice of what steps we need to take or if any issue that you have read is in your field.

So I pray and hope this reaches somebody that can help us and if we can knock this wall down together when we couldn't do it by ourselves in the past—it would be great.

If you are interested about my case and want to know more about the injustice please feel free to contact me or my lawyer: (see contact listing)

Sincerely,

Darryl D Turner



# Mario D Woodward

My name is Mario Dion Woodward, age 37. I'm from Montgomery Alabama. I am currently serving time on Alabama's Death Row here at Donaldson Correctional Facility in Bessemer Alabama. The reason for my correspondence is in the hopes of reaching out with my brother and gaining some national attention in exposing the injustice in Alabama's judicial system and its Death Penalty procedures that I feel are unconstitutional.

First and foremost, I would like to say that I, myself, am a victim of the injustice here in the state of Alabama and I am one of many. Injustice takes place all over the United States—Texas, California, Chicago, etc. The injustice in these places gain worldwide attention and are not unnoticed. Here in Alabama, we feel as if our cry has been silent as the cry of some of those from foreign countries have been for decades. All we ask for is JUSTICE.

Now as I have aforementioned, I am a victim of injustice here in Alabama. On September 29, 2006, I was accused of attempted murder of a Montgomery Police officer that was shot in the line of duty. This officer later died and the charges against me were amended to capital murder of a Peace Officer. This was a very high profile case in Montgomery and it received extensive publicity up until my trial date. Anyways, I was charged, indicted and wrongfully convicted in 2008. A Montgomery jury found me guilty and recommended a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Their vote was 8 to 4, with 8 being life without and four being for death. There was a judicial override by the judge and he sentenced me to death.

The states case was based wholly on circumstantial evidence. My trial counsel was

ineffective by not presenting a defense in my behalf. The state presented its case and trial counsel crossed examined state witnesses, but never-- not once --did trial counsel call a witness in my favor to the stand. As the state rested its case, the defense rested its case as well. Therefore, I join my brothers in their efforts to bring justice and liberty to the men and women of this state that are also victims of the injustice here, BUT we can't do it alone. We have had the Alabama state senator try and get a bill passed for a moratorium on the Death Penalty cases. So that all Death penalty cases could be investigated so that there could be no wrongfully convicted or executed men or women in this state but the Alabama legislation has yet to pass such a bill. So please, you have got to hear our cry because justice here in Alabama is well overdue.

Sincerely,

Mario Dion Woodward

(see Contact Listing)

# Contact List

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Assist in Internet research. This allows us to build connections and better resources to better our cause.

Media contacts, or provide your opinion or experiences that will help further our cause or that you would like to have printed in our upcoming newsletters, whether you are pro or anti death penalty.

Write the Governor in support of our cause:

Governor Robert Bentley  
State Capitol  
600 Dexter Avenue, Room 104  
Montgomery, AL 36130

