

RACE, INNOCENCE, & THE DECLINE OF THE DEATH PENALTY

All Events Free & Open to the Public
Tuesdays 5:30 – 7:00 PM
UNC–Chapel Hill
Genome Sciences Building Auditorium G100

Organized by: Frank R. Baumgartner &
Kaneesha R. Johnson

Sponsored by The UNC Department of
Political Science

FEB 3

CHRIS OCHOA

Feb 3, Chris Ochoa. Mr. Ochoa was wrongfully convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison in 1989 in Austin TX. He was exonerated in 2001 after the actual perpetrator confessed to the crime and DNA showed Mr. Ochoa's innocence. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 2006 and is now an attorney.

FEB 17

CHRIS TURNER

Mr. Turner was one of 17 young people in Washington DC to be charged in a brutal killing, in what became known as the "8th and H" case. The 1984 crime occurred in a busy area of the city in broad daylight and yet there were no witnesses; eight young men were convicted of the same crime. Mr. Turner served 26 years in maximum security prisons throughout the federal system.

FEB 24

KEN NIXON

Mr. Nixon, 19 at the time, was convicted of a 2005 fire-bombing that caused two deaths. He served 16 years for murder and was released from Wayne County Michigan in 2021. Errors came from using testimony from a 13-year-old survivor of the crime despite conflicting statements from that same witness, forensics based on dog-sniffing, and a jailhouse fabricator.

MAR 24

MARVIN ANDERSON

Mr. Anderson, 18 at the time, was arrested and eventually sentenced to 210 years in Virginia's prison system for a 1982 crime in which he was completely uninvolved. He served 20 years before being exonerated in 2002 when DNA evidence excluded him and pointed to someone many had suspected from the beginning, and who had confessed to the crime years before. After being released, Mr. Anderson followed his dream of being a firefighter and eventually rose to the rank of Fire Chief in Hanover, VA.

MAR 31

ISAAC KNAPPER & AMY BANKS

University of Maine history professor Ronald Banks was shot and killed during a robbery outside his convention hotel in downtown New Orleans in 1979. Isaac Knapper, 16, was arrested a week later and convicted of the crime, serving 12 years of a life sentence at notorious Angola prison before being exonerated when perjury, misconduct, and other flaws in the conviction were revealed. Amy Banks is the daughter of Professor Banks and was never notified that the case against her father's killer had fallen apart. She has befriended Mr. Knapper.

APR 7

BETTY ANNE WATERS

Kenneth Waters was wrongfully convicted of murder in 1980 and served 18 years of a life sentence before being released through the tireless efforts of his sister, Betty Anne. She knew her brother was innocent and put herself through community college, college, and law school in order to gain the skills she needed to set him free. The 2010 film Conviction describes their story.

APR 14

**LEON BENSON &
KOLLEEN SCHOEN BUNCH**

Kasey Schoen, 25, was killed in a 1998 murder in Indianapolis IN. Leon Benson, then 22, was later arrested and convicted for the crime, spending 24 years in Indiana prisons for a crime that was actually committed by a police informant named Joseph Webster. All this was known to police or prosecutors at the time. Kolleen Schoen Bunch is Kasey's sister and has befriended Mr. Benson.

APR 21

KRISTINE BUNCH

Ms. Bunch, from rural Indiana, was convicted of murder by arson and served more than 17 years before she was able to demonstrate that the fire that had killed her young son in a trailer home they shared in 1995 had in fact been accidental. At the time of her arrest, she was pregnant with a son, who was taken from her and raised by her family during her wrongful incarceration.

Metered parking available after 5pm in the Bell Tower
Parking Deck adjacent to the Genome Sciences Building



The University
of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill