

# 2015 Organizational Highlights

Death Penalty Resource & Defense Center

**DEATH PENALTY RESOURCE & DEFENSE CENTER**

January 15, 2016  
Mandy Medlock, Executive Director

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## Death Penalty Resource & Defense Center

The mission of the Death Penalty Resource & Defense Center is to promote fairness, reliability and transparency in the criminal justice system for people facing the death penalty in South Carolina. We do this through:

- Direct Representation
- Resources and Training
- Policy Reform
- Public Education

2015 was a banner year for the Center; below are many of the highlights from the last year along with a glimpse towards 2016 developments.

### I. Advocacy Efforts

In March, the Center joined forces with several partner organizations to defeat South Carolina Senate Bill 553/House Bill 3853. The bill attempted to make information about the Department of Corrections' procurement of lethal injection drugs a "state secret." This bill would have shielded the Department of Corrections from public accountability and transparency necessary in proper democratic representation.

### II. The Mercy Ruling

On August 6, 2015, the South Carolina Supreme Court issued a ruling affirming that mercy be a consideration for jurists in capital punishment cases. DPR&DC Legal Director Emily Paavola, who represented one of the individuals whose case the court considered said, "For decades, South Carolina law has provided that jurors may give a life sentence for any reason, or no reason at all, including as an act of mercy." As a result of the ruling, three individuals had their death sentences vacated.

### III. Community Partnerships

Strong efforts were made in 2015 to solidify relationships with community partners with whom the Death Penalty Resource & Defense shares a mission of fairness, reliability & transparency in the criminal justice system. Among those with whom we worked:

- Able South Carolina
- American Bar Association, Death Penalty Due Process Review Project
- Catholic Diocese of South Carolina
- Cornell University, Cornell Death Penalty Project

- Mercy Amicus brief participants
- NC Conservatives Concerned about the Death Penalty
- Numerous South Carolina religious leaders & scholars
- Protection & Advocacy for People with Disabilities
- Sisters of Charity Foundation
- South Carolina Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys
- South Carolina Association of Non-Profit Organizations
- South Carolina Innocence Project
- South Carolina Catholic Conference
- The 8th Amendment Project
- The Arc of South Carolina
- The Innocence Network

#### **IV. Press & Publications**

Offering unbiased facts regarding Capital Punishment in South Carolina is a service the Death Penalty Resource & Defense Center continues to offer for media and other public information outlets. In 2015 we served:

- ColaDaily.Com
- Columbia Business Daily
- Cumulus Radio
- The Free Times
- The Greenville News
- South Carolina Lawyers Weekly
- WISTV

#### **V. Public Events & Outreach**

Educating the public to raise awareness about the administration of capital sentencing in South Carolina is a primary goal of the Death Penalty Resource & Defense Center. In 2015 we presented to:

- Atkins Update, 12th National Seminar on the Development and Integration of Mitigation Evidence, Baltimore, Maryland
- Lethal Injection Secrecy, Bending the Arc, New Orleans, Louisiana

- 12th National Seminar on the Development and Integration of Mitigation Evidence, Baltimore, Maryland
- Lectures on Race and the Death Penalty, University of South Carolina
- National Federal Habeas Corpus Seminar, Charlotte, North Carolina
- North Main Street Rotary Club, Columbia, S.C.
- Public outreach events across South Carolina – Greenville, Aiken, Charleston
- South Carolina Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys, DUI Seminar, Columbia
- South Carolina Women’s Lawyers Association, Horry County
- Spring Valley Assault Community Forum, Columbia

## VI. Re-branding of “the Center”

Beginning January 31, 2016 the Death Penalty Resource & Defense Center will be renamed to:



Our mission remains the same. Please continue to follow us on our social media outlets,

Facebook: [/justice36osc](#)

Twitter: [@justice36osc](#)

And our website: [www.justice36osc.org](http://www.justice36osc.org)

## VII. 2016 Board of Directors

- Terry Alexander
- Gary Capps (Treasurer)
- Shantal M. Chan-Friday
- Elizabeth Franklin-Best
- Charles Grose (immediate Past Chair)
- Pamela D. Robinson
- Peter Shahid, Jr.
- Todd Steadman
- Christopher A. Sullivan
- Kitty Sutton (Board Chair)
- Robin Wheeler

*“THE GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE CENTER IN 2015 AND IN EVERY YEAR IS THAT WE PROVIDE CARING AND INVOLVED REPRESENTATION FOR OVER A DOZEN INDIVIDUALS ON SOUTH CAROLINA’S DEATH ROW. IN MANY CASES, WE ARE THE ONLY VISITORS THESE MEN RECEIVE. I BELIEVE WE PROVIDE MORE THAN JUST LEGAL SERVICES TO THESE MEN; WE PROVIDE THEM A SUPPORT THEY HAVE NEVER HAD IN THEIR LIVES. I AM HONORED TO BE ABLE TO DO THIS AND I THINK IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE DO. THROUGH CARING FOR AND SUPPORTING OUR CLIENTS WE ARE ABLE TO GIVE THEM SOME DIGNITY IN THIS TRULY DEGRADING PROCESS.” LINDSEY VANN, STAFF ATTORNEY*