

Condemned in the Dark: The Case Against Paul Everett's Death Sentence

Jeff Hood

Published by Complicit Press, 2026.

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CONDEMNED IN THE DARK: THE CASE AGAINST PAUL EVERETT'S DEATH SENTENCE

First edition. March 11, 2026.

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ISBN: 979-8233929939

Written by Jeff Hood.

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Introduction

A Man on Death Row and Justice Denied

Paul Everett is forty-seven years old. He has been on Florida's death row since he was twenty-two. He speaks on the prison phone in a voice that is steady, unbroken and unadorned—the voice of a man who has made peace with who he is, but not with the false conviction that put him in a cage.

That false conviction has cost him more than twenty years of his life. Now, the state of Florida is preparing to end what remains.

On a Friday in the fall of 2001, a woman named Kelli Bailey was found dead in her home in Bay County, Florida. She had been beaten and sexually assaulted, and her neck had been broken. The crime was brutal, the investigation swift, and within weeks, law enforcement had settled on a suspect: Paul Everett, a young man from Fort Payne, Alabama, who had been staying nearby at a local motel.

Paul Everett was convicted of first-degree murder, burglary of a dwelling with battery, and sexual battery involving serious physical force. The jury recommended a death sentence unanimously. The trial judge imposed it. And Paul Everett has sat on Florida's death row ever since—through two decades of appeals, through successive postconviction motions, through the grinding machinery of a system that increasingly treats finality as more sacred than justice.

This book is about what Florida's courts have not yet been forced to confront: the full account, in Paul Everett's own words, of what happened to Kelli Bailey, and the compelling physical evidence that corroborates that account while pointing directly at the man who actually killed her.

That man is Jared Farmer.

Paul Everett did not kill Kelli Bailey. He did not know she was going to be killed. He did not know she had been killed. He did not know who killed her until Jared Farmer raised his hand with pride and made himself known. Before that moment of grim revelation, Paul Everett had spent years believing it was one of the male neighbors with whom Kelli had relationships.

On the night of November 1, Paul Everett was in Kelli Bailey's house when Jared Farmer and two other men forced their way in. Paul Everett shoved Farmer away from Kelli. He tried to deescalate the confrontation. And then he left—believing, catastrophically, that his departure was what the moment called for. That it would defuse the situation. That Kelli was shaken, but not in mortal danger.

He was wrong. It's the mistake he has lived with every day since. But leaving a living woman in a frightening situation is not murder. The men who stayed behind are responsible for what happened after Paul Everett walked out that door.

The evidence that was never tested includes hairs found in Kelli's hands and on her arm, possible skin tissue recovered from her hands, fingernail scrapings and clippings from her own fingers: the very physical remnants a victim leaves behind when she fights for her life. These materials were submitted for expedited analysis at law enforcement's explicit request. They were never analyzed. They were never compared to Jared Farmer's known DNA standard. They remain in law enforcement's possession to this day.

What follows is a careful, thorough examination of Paul Everett's case, drawn from court records, legal briefs and directly from Paul Everett himself. He has asked that his account be shared. Every detail of his

narrative has been drawn from conversations with him and verified with those closest to him. This is what they all collectively know to be true.

Florida's death chamber awaits Paul Everett. But before an execution, these facts deserve a hearing.

The Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood

March 5, 2026

Chapter 1

Fort Payne and the Road South

A Childhood in the Sock Capital of the World

Paul Everett grew up in Fort Payne, Alabama, a small town that once called itself the “sock capital of the world.” Hosiery mills dotted the landscape. People worked hard and knew one another. He came from a large family of seven siblings. They weren’t rich, but they were stable. It was the kind of childhood that only reveals its goodness after it’s gone.

Drugs arrived early. Marijuana in middle school. Daily use by fourteen. Methamphetamine by seventeen. Once meth took hold, it reorganized everything. Addiction became routine, as ordinary as breathing. Then the mills collapsed. Jobs disappeared. The ground gave way beneath the family, and Paul, still a teenager, did what desperate kids do. He hustled. He dropped out of school at sixteen. He cycled in and out of jail for petty, nonviolent offenses: addiction crimes, poverty crimes, the predictable wreckage of a young life with no footing. There is nothing in Paul Everett’s past that points toward violence. No assaults. No cruelty. No pattern that would make sense of what the state later accused him of.

Looking for a Way Out

By 2001, Paul Everett was twenty-two and trying to escape the gravity of everything he’d become. He wanted out—out of meth, out of Fort Payne, out of the cycle. He had a girlfriend back home and a fragile hope that something like stability might still be possible.

Linking up with Jared Farmer seemed to offer a path. Panama City, Florida. Connections. Money. Weed instead of meth. A fresh start. It sounded like a rescue. It was not. Farmer had no real network, just small

dealers and meth users whose paranoia ran hot. Paul Everett realized quickly that there was no future there. He decided to give it a few days and return to Alabama. Before he did, he had a chance encounter that would change everything.

That is when he met her.

The Woman He Met in Panama City

A brief encounter turned into conversation, and before long, they were spending time together.

Over the weeks that followed, Paul and Kelli developed a relationship. He came to know her. She never shared her full name with him. Paul Everett would not learn who she really was until she was dead—and he would not learn she was dead until two weeks after it happened.

At no point during their time together did Paul Everett ask Kelli about the men who lived two houses north of her: men she knew as Chico and his brother. She had no idea Paul had any connection to them. He had kept that fact carefully separate, by design. The relationship between Kelli and Chico was already its own thing, with its own history, before Paul ever walked into the picture. He had stumbled into a situation whose full dimensions he would not understand until it was far too late.

Chapter 2

The Paranoia that Surrounded Kelli Bailey

What the Lead Sheets Reveal

The investigation into Kelli Bailey's death began, as investigations do, with law enforcement canvassing the neighborhood. What those early lead sheets reveal is more significant than the original trial ever acknowledged.

A lead sheet submitted by Lt. Chad Lindsey records that on November 3rd, 2001, at approximately 8:45 a.m., Lt. Lindsey visited 516 Lantana and spoke with Margaret Johnson. Ms. Johnson stated she didn't know Kelli, but had seen her "walking up and down Lantana checking mailboxes" on several occasions.

This detail—a woman covertly watching the block, checking mailboxes, behaving in a manner that could be characterized as surveillance—is the seed of the paranoia that festered within Farmer, Chico, and a man known as Bubba Wilson. To minds running hot on methamphetamine, a woman watching their block and checking their mailboxes was not a curious neighbor. She was a threat.

A second lead sheet from that same morning, recorded at approximately 9:15 a.m., documents Lt. Lindsey's visit to 208 Lantana, where he spoke with Greg Webster. Webster's son, who had been selling items for a school fundraiser, recalled seeing two Mexican men in the house with Kelli some time before her death. Notably, two individuals fitting that description lived two houses north of Kelli on Lantana: Chico and his brother. The son's account confirms what Paul Everett knew from his own limited observation: Chico and his brother had a preexisting relationship with Kelli Bailey. Something had occurred between them

that had her paying close attention to their activities. Paul never knew the nature of that history. He never asked Kelli about it because she didn't know he had any connection to those men.

What the Paranoid Men Believed

To Chico, Bubba and Farmer, the picture took on a sinister shape. A woman was watching the block. A woman was checking mailboxes. That same woman seemed to be spending a great deal of time with an outsider from Alabama. And now that outsider, Paul Everett, was defending her, saying she wasn't a threat, vouching for a woman they believed was watching them.

In the logic of meth paranoia, defending her made Paul suspect too. To them, his arrival had been impeccably timed. A complete fluke, in reality—a chance encounter with a young man looking for conversation—but it did not look like a fluke to people who believed they were under surveillance.

The trio, as Paul came to understand it, wanted to know for certain whether Kelli Bailey was an undercover officer. Sometime in the days before November 1, someone among Chico's people entered her home while Kelli and Paul were otherwise occupied. They searched her computer for anything that might confirm their suspicions. They found nothing. For a brief window, it seemed the paranoia might ease.

It did not.

Paul Everett's Trip Back to Alabama

Paul Everett made a trip back to Fort Payne in the days before November 1. He told Farmer they needed to go back and get more product: that was the stated reason. It was not the real one.

The actual purpose of the trip was to have a face-to-face conversation with the man Paul owed. He needed to explain that Farmer had given product on consignment to people—Chico, Bubba, and their circle—who did not appear to have any infrastructure for paying what they owed. Paul's message to his supplier was clear: If Paul called the following weekend without a specific prearranged message, his supplier should come to Florida for a reckoning, a heart-to-heart with Farmer and Farmer's family about how they were going to round up the \$5,400 that Farmer's recklessness had put on the table.

Paul had not endorsed giving anyone product on consignment. Farmer had done that unilaterally. The sudden presence of Paul's supplier would have made it unmistakable that Farmer alone had created this problem and that Farmer's family would need to fix it. That was the true purpose of the Alabama trip.

They returned to Florida empty-handed, as Paul had known they would. That did not sit well with Farmer. Forced sobriety was getting under his skin. The trip south was strained. At a Wendy's on the way back, when Paul paid only for his own food, Farmer reluctantly produced his own money: bills he had been hiding behind photographs in his wallet. Paul snatched the entire amount, used some to pay for Farmer's food, and pocketed the rest. Less than a hundred dollars. It was a pointed message: This debt is yours and I will collect what I can until you make it right.

Farmer brooded the rest of the way south. He wanted to call his mother. Paul pulled the phone from its socket, put his foot through Farmer's stereo, and made himself clear: The situation was serious, the debt was Farmer's creation, and Farmer needed to put pressure on his people to produce money quickly. Farmer left that Wednesday evening and Paul did not see him again until the night of November 1.

Chapter 3

The Night of November 1, 2001

The Last Days Before

In the days after the Alabama trip, Paul Everett was either at the motel or at Kelli's house. He went nowhere else. He saw no one else. Those days were quiet in the way that precedes a storm: ordinary on the surface, carrying nothing of what was about to happen.

The last visit began like the others. He and Kelli were together. Then Kelli paused, said she thought she heard someone in the house. Probably one of her parents, she said. She told Paul to be quiet and hide. Then, he heard Kelli's voice from the other side of the door. She said, "What the fuck are you doing in my house?"

What Paul Everett Saw

Paul came into the living room.

Kelli was on the floor between the coffee table and the entertainment center, holding her mouth. Jared Farmer was standing over her.

Paul stepped over Kelli and shoved Farmer. He demanded to know what the hell they were doing. Sitting on the couch was a Latino man whom Paul could only assume was Chico, the only Latino male he had ever seen in that circle. Standing near the front door, to the right of the couch, was Bubba Wilson. Bubba was holding a gun.

Chico spoke first. He said they didn't really have a problem with Paul—yet. Then he said that Kelli wasn't who she said she was and said a name that did not register for Paul in the heat of the moment. That name would not click into place until two weeks later, when Paul's father called

him with information about a death investigation in Bay County—and Paul suddenly understood that the name Chico had spoken in that room was Kelli Bailey’s full name.

What Paul Believed Was Happening

In the intensity of those moments, Paul Everett’s ego misread the situation. Chico’s demeanor was flat, controlled, emotionless. Everything about it read to Paul as the posture of a jealous, jilted ex-boyfriend using other people’s paranoia as a vehicle for something personal. Farmer and Bubba seemed agitated in the way men get when they’ve finally found their moment to be bold. Farmer, who had been pouty and humiliated for days since Paul took his money, now had backup. He was puffing his chest in a way he hadn’t been able to when it was just the two of them.

The confrontation escalated when Farmer brought up the Alabama trip. He implied that Kelli had been seen parked near Paul’s supplier’s house while they were there. “Explain that” was essentially their position. The more Paul pushed back, the more Farmer and Bubba fed off each other. Chico stayed cold and still.

In Paul’s read of the room, the emotional engine of the situation was jealousy and territorial, wounded pride. Paul believed that his presence was the fuel and that his departure would extinguish it.

The Decision He Cannot Take Back

Paul Everett left Kelli Bailey’s house on the night of November 1, 2001. When he walked out, Kelli was on the floor. She was injured. But she was alive.

He has replayed that moment every day since. It was not cowardice that made him go. It was a catastrophically wrong assessment of what was driving the scene. He believed his absence was the solution. He was

wrong. What was actually stirring the pot was not his presence; it was Chico's command of Farmer and Bubba, who had their orders and would carry them out regardless of whether Paul was in the room.

As Paul Everett has said himself, "I wasn't familiar with Chico personally. November 1 was the one and only time I ever saw him. I genuinely thought I was deescalating the true nature of what was stirring the pot. I was very wrong and I wish I had seen what was coming. I would never have left her had I known what was to come. I can't say I would've been able to prevent the outcome, but I would not have left her there alone. Period."

Not long after, Jared Farmer killed Kelli Bailey.

Chapter 4

The Weeks After: Fear, Silence, and a Coerced Confession

A Family under Threat

In the days after Paul Everett left Kelli's house, his world became a different kind of nightmare. The activity around his family was beyond unsettling. Someone was leaving Paul's personal items on his father's doorstep at night. The message was unmistakable: We know where your people are, and they are sitting ducks. You better not say a word.

The atmosphere felt like the cartels had arrived at his family's door. Nothing that went through his mind was remotely positive. A terrible thing had happened to a woman who did not deserve it. Now, someone was making sure Paul understood the cost of speaking.

What Paul Didn't Know

For the first several days after the confrontation in Kelli's house, Paul Everett did not know Kelli was dead. He did not know who she really was. When law enforcement began circling him, his assumption was that he was being investigated for a fight he had been in with a different man in Panama City before Halloween.

Then Lt. Lindsey threatened him explicitly: threatened to strap him to a table, put needles in him and kill him. That threat, delivered by a law enforcement officer, became the frame through which Paul understood his situation. He was not in a position to speak freely. He was in a position to survive.

Two weeks after November 1, Paul's father called him by phone. His father said a name: Kelli Bailey.

In that instant, Paul reflected back on the scene in her living room—the name Chico had spoken in the heat of the moment, the name that had not registered then. It registered now. That was the moment Paul Everett learned that the woman he had come to know was dead. That was the moment he understood what had happened after he left.

The Confession Paul Was Forced to Give

Paul Everett made statements to law enforcement that the State characterized at trial as a confession to Kelli Bailey's murder. Those statements were coerced. They were coerced by direct threats from law enforcement and by the terror of knowing that Farmer and his people could reach Paul's family at any time. Paul's confession was not a voluntary statement by a guilty man. It was the desperate calculation of a frightened young man who had been threatened with death and who had seen what Farmer's people were capable of.

This is not a claim invented for litigation. It is what Paul has said from the beginning, consistently, across more than two decades. Lt. Lindsey's own statements acknowledge the threats Paul described. The confession was not a product of guilt. It was a product of terror.

The specific details in Paul's statements that law enforcement treated as corroboration are entirely consistent with a man who was present at the scene but did not commit the murder, who was in the room, saw the initial assault and left before the killing occurred. His knowledge of the layout of the house, the living room, the physical circumstances of Kelli's position on the floor—these things prove he was present. They do not prove he killed her. That distinction, which is legally critical, was never clearly put before the jury.

The Science of False Confessions

The law has been slow to accept what social science has now established with substantial empirical rigor: Innocent people confess to crimes they did not commit. They do so with alarming frequency.

A landmark study by West and Meterko, reviewing DNA exoneration cases from 1989 to 2014, found that 27 percent of the first 325 known DNA exoneration cases involved false confessions by an innocent defendant. More than one in four people who were later proven innocent by DNA evidence had, at some point, confessed to the crime.

False confessions occur for many reasons. Physical coercion, sleep deprivation, psychological pressure, fear of worse consequences, threats against loved ones and the desire to end an unbearable interrogation are all documented causes. Paul Everett's account—threatened with death by a law enforcement officer, intimidated through his family by Farmer's associates, coerced into silence about what he actually saw—falls squarely within what social scientists call a compliant false confession: one in which the suspect knows the confession is false but provides it to escape an immediate, life-threatening situation.

Chapter 5

Jared Farmer: The Man Who Knew Too Much

Two Suspects, One Fish Billy

The investigation into Kelli Bailey's murder began with a fish billy, a weighted club typically found on fishing boats. This item was discovered near the crime scene and became the first investigatory lead linking specific individuals to the crime.

Surveillance camera footage from a local store showed two men purchasing the fish billy just days before Kelli was killed. Those two men were Paul Everett and Jared Farmer.

This single fact is foundational to understanding everything that followed. Both men were at the store. Both men were seen together on camera. From the very beginning of the investigation, Jared Farmer was not a peripheral figure. He was a co-suspect, as central to the physical evidence as Paul Everett himself.

Farmer's First False Statement

When law enforcement interviewed Jared Farmer about the fish billy purchase, he was untruthful. He told investigators he was not present when it was purchased. When confronted with the surveillance footage, with indisputable visual evidence of his presence, he admitted he had been untruthful.

This admission is significant not merely as evidence of consciousness of guilt, but as a window into Farmer's behavior pattern throughout the entire investigation: He was deceptive when he could be, conceded only

when caught, and was never pressed on the most damning question of all: how he came to know details about Kelli's death that no innocent bystander should have known.

What Farmer Told People Before the Public Knew

Law enforcement, in public statements and news reports about Kelli's death, reported only that she had died from blunt trauma or a blow to the body. They deliberately withheld the specific location and nature of her fatal injuries. They did not publicly disclose that her neck had been broken. They did not disclose the layout of the attack within the home. They did not reveal that she had been attacked in the living room.

Yet Jared Farmer told people all of these things.

John Blackburn was interviewed by law enforcement on November 7, days before investigators even conducted their first formal interview with Farmer. Blackburn told police that Farmer was telling people a woman had been murdered behind La Fiesta Motel and that he thought she might have been strangled when the guy tried to rob her. A juvenile had come forward on November 5 reporting that Blackburn told her he'd heard it was a guy named Paul that killed the woman.

When law enforcement subsequently interviewed Mike Frederick, a person to whom Farmer himself had spoken, the account became even more specific. Frederick reported that Farmer came to his workplace the day after Kelli's body was found and told him a detailed story: Paul had seen a white female in her backyard, said he was going to come back burglarize the home, went in through the back door, found a woman home sleeping who woke up startled then met up with her in the living room area and strangled her. Law enforcement knew that Kelli had been found with a pool of blood in her living room. They did not confront Farmer with how he knew the specific location of the assault.

Consider what Farmer knew: that she was asleep, that she woke up, that the encounter happened in the living room, that she was strangled. These are not facts a bystander learns from rumors. These are facts a perpetrator carries.

In a subsequent interview on November 15, Farmer repeated a version of this story, attributing his knowledge to his mother. Law enforcement did not ask Farmer or his mother, who was present in the room, how either of them had come to possess such a precise account of the crime.

Even after Farmer was arrested for perjury over the fish billy deception, more witnesses came forward telling law enforcement that Farmer had been describing Kelli as strangled or choked and that she had been awakened during a burglary. Law enforcement took these reports but ceased any meaningful investigation of Farmer once he retained counsel.

The Timeline That Doesn't Add Up

Farmer told law enforcement that on Friday, November 2, he and Everett had been together all day, that they argued and that he left the motel at around 6:00 p.m. He said he called his mother the following day, November 3, asking her to come back to Florida.

His mother told a different story. She said Jared called her around lunchtime on Friday, November 2. It took about an hour to an hour and a half before they were actually able to connect. Once they spoke, around 2:00 to 2:30 p.m. on Friday, she packed her things and drove back to Florida. Law enforcement verified her account with her time sheet from work: She was clocked in at the Holiday Terrace Motel in Panama City on Saturday, November 3, at 8:30 a.m. If she drove from Alabama, a trip of six to seven hours, she must have left on Friday afternoon, which means Farmer called her in a panic right around the timeframe when Kelli Bailey was being killed. His mother, notably described by the lead

detective as very overprotective of her son, immediately turned around and drove through the night to reach him.

Law enforcement had all of this information. They did not confront Farmer with the contradiction between his timeline and his mother's verified account.

Farmer's Criminal History and His Own Words

Jared Farmer's background reveals a pattern of violent, predatory conduct that bears a disturbing resemblance to the crime committed against Kelli Bailey. At the time Paul Everett's initial postconviction counsel was preparing his 3.851 motion, Farmer was under indictment in Georgia for armed robbery, burglary, two counts of aggravated assault and kidnapping. The allegations against him in that case mirror what happened to Kelli: Farmer was accused of breaking into a victim's home, dragging her around looking for valuables, demanding she remove her clothes and assaulting her with a baseball bat. His family hired private counsel before trial, and Farmer was acquitted.

In the years since Paul Everett's conviction, Farmer has been arrested for burglary of a conveyance, where he allegedly followed a victim's daughter home the night before; burglary of a dwelling, where he allegedly tried to enter a home through a window while the occupants were sleeping; and interference with child custody, where the allegation was sexual battery of a minor.

Most significantly, over the years since Everett's conviction, Farmer has reportedly made statements to multiple people that he has killed before and that someone else is doing time for his crime. These are not the words of an innocent man. These are statements that, if true, constitute a confession.

Chapter 6

The Investigation That Stopped Looking

Tunnel Vision

Law enforcement's investigation into Kelli Bailey's murder illustrates a well-documented phenomenon: tunnel vision. Once investigators settle on a primary suspect, the process of gathering and evaluating evidence can shift, subtly or not so subtly, from discovering what actually happened to building a case against the chosen target.

In this case, the State told the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) lab analyst that the subject was Paul Everett. In subsequent communications, the lead prosecutor's secretary told the analyst they were only concerned with Paul Everett. This directive effectively determined which evidence would be analyzed and which would not.

The fish billy was tested in the serology department and transferred to the DNA section, but no report was ever issued showing it was actually tested for DNA or compared against Farmer's known DNA standard. The fingernail scrapings were tested in the serology department, but no report was ever issued showing they were tested for DNA or compared to Farmer. The possible tissue from Kelli's hands was apparently never tested at all. The hairs recovered from Kelli's hands, arm and bathroom sink; her shirt; the bed post top; the blue fleece jacket found near the crime scene—none produced a DNA report. None were compared to Farmer's known standard.

The only item that was actually analyzed and produced a result was the DNA swab results, which matched Paul Everett. Once that result came back, the systematic testing of all other evidence appears to have ceased.

What That DNA Match Actually Proves

The DNA swab results matched Paul Everett. The prosecution presented this as proof of his guilt. But this evidence is far less determinative than the State implied. Paul Everett had a prior relationship with Kelli Bailey. He had been to her home before her death. DNA from prior contact can remain present for 72 hours or more. The DNA match proves that Paul had been in her home. It does not prove that Paul was present when she was killed.

The prosecution's claim that they didn't have anyone else's DNA was technically true but deeply misleading. It was true because the evidence most likely to contain the killer's DNA—the material from Kelli's own hands and nails, from her last physical struggle—was never tested. The absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence. The jury was never told that distinction. They were never told that multiple items of biological evidence had been submitted for expedited testing and never analyzed.

The Medical Record and the Abrasion

There is a specific physical detail that the prosecution used against Paul Everett at trial—a physical abrasion found during Kelli Bailey's autopsy, presented as evidence of assault—that deserves direct examination. Kelli Bailey had a medical procedure just three days before her death. The presence of a single three-millimeter surface abrasion is precisely what such a procedure can produce. The abrasion cited by the prosecution as evidence of criminal assault is entirely consistent with, and most likely explained by, a routine medical procedure performed three days earlier.

This fact was available from the beginning. It was not meaningfully confronted at trial. The medical examiner's initial findings, before the confession was fed back into the investigation, told a different story from the account that was ultimately presented to the jury. Justice requires

giving credibility to those initial findings—not to the altered position the medical examiner took after a forced, false confession had already shaped what law enforcement expected the evidence to show.

The Bounty Hunters and the Alibi No One Pursued

Perhaps the most striking single fact in Paul Everett's case, one that deserves far more attention than it has received, is this: Paul Everett was taken into custody by bounty hunters on November 2, 2001, after having been under their surveillance all day.

Paul was not moving through Bay County committing murder on November 2. He was under observation. He was being watched. And then he was taken. The arm of the law that removed Paul Everett from the streets on November 2 corroborates his account of events. It deserves full credibility. The fact that this surveillance and custody occurred on the very day Kelli Bailey was killed is not a minor detail. It is a central pillar of the factual record in this case.

The Investigation That Died When Farmer Got a Lawyer

Law enforcement arrested Jared Farmer for perjury over his false statement about the fish billy purchase. Instead of treating this as an opportunity to press harder on a documented liar who possessed nonpublic facts about the crime, law enforcement allowed Farmer's newly hired attorney to end the investigation entirely.

Farmer's family hired a high-priced attorney who immediately sent law enforcement a demand that they cease contact with his client. Law enforcement complied. No additional interviews. No confrontation with the inconsistencies between Farmer's timeline and his mother's verified account. No comparison of his DNA standard against the physical evidence. No further inquiry into how he knew what he knew.

The investigation into Jared Farmer's potential role in Kelli Bailey's murder ended the moment he retained counsel and never resumed.

Chapter 7

The Science of the Untested Evidence

Why DNA from Kelli's Hands and Nails Is Different

Not all DNA evidence is created equal. The probative value of a DNA sample depends heavily on where it was found, how it got there and what innocent explanation, if any, might account for its presence.

The Florida Supreme Court, in *Overton v. State*, addressed this distinction directly. The Court spoke approvingly of testing the victim's fingernail scrapings, explaining that the presence of skin cells that are neither the appellant's nor the victim's could indicate the existence of another perpetrator. The Court distinguished between hair on tape bindings, which could come from any source at any time, and fingernail scrapings, which are far more directly connected to the perpetrator.

The evidence Paul Everett is seeking to have tested falls precisely in the category Overton endorsed. These are not hairs found on a random surface. These are biological materials from Kelli's own hands and nails—the receptacles of a woman fighting for her life. Hair in her hands. Possible skin and tissue in her hands. Nail scrapings from under her fingernails.

If Jared Farmer's DNA is found under Kelli's nails and in the hair clutched in her hands, there is only one plausible explanation: He fought with her. He was in physical contact with her as she died. He was her killer.

No Innocent Explanation for Farmer's DNA

Unlike Paul Everett's DNA in the DNA swab, which is entirely explained by a prior relationship between two people who knew each other, Jared Farmer had no relationship with Kelli Bailey that would explain his biological material in her defensive clutch. There is no innocent version of Farmer's DNA under Kelli Bailey's fingernails.

Paul Everett and Kelli Bailey knew each other. He had been in her home. His DNA at the scene is unremarkable. Farmer's DNA in her hands would be something else entirely. It would be the physical signature of her final struggle, captured in the evidence that law enforcement collected, submitted for expedited analysis and then never analyzed.

Modern DNA Technology and the Degradation Myth

The State has suggested that evidence preserved since 2001 may be too degraded to produce usable results. This argument is not scientifically grounded. DNA analysis technology has advanced dramatically in the years since this evidence was collected. Modern techniques—including touch DNA analysis, low copy number DNA analysis and advanced short tandem repeat (STR) profiling—can produce profiles from biological materials that would have been untestable even fifteen years ago. The assumption that two-decade-old evidence cannot be analyzed is an assumption that should be tested, not accepted without verification.

Chapter 8

The Trial That Never Heard the Facts

The Verdict No Informed Jury Would Have Reached

The trial of Paul Everett was brief, shockingly brief for a capital case. The defense's goal was to avoid execution, not to prove innocence. The jury received a case stripped of its full context: no Chico, no Bubba Wilson, no paranoia dynamic, no prior relationship between Paul and Kelli, no medical records, no bounty hunter surveillance, no timeline inconsistencies between Farmer and his mother, no neighbors who had seen Farmer's car, no witnesses who heard Farmer describing details of the crime before they were public.

Jared Farmer never testified. Bubba never testified. Chico never testified. The jury never heard about the night of November 1 from anyone who was in that room. They never heard that Paul Everett shoved Farmer away from Kelli, tried to deescalate and left believing she was alive and that the situation would resolve. They received a compressed, prosecution-shaped narrative in which Paul Everett was a stranger who broke into a woman's home and murdered her.

The prosecution needed him to be a stranger. He was not. He was a young man who had spent time with her, who knew her. That reality was inconvenient and it never entered the courtroom.

The State, in closing argument, told the jury: We don't have anybody else's DNA. The jury did not know that was true only because the State had never tested the evidence most likely to contain someone else's DNA. They did not know that hairs from Kelli's own hands had been

submitted for expedited analysis and never examined. They could not weigh evidence they were never told existed.

The trial took place in the shadow of September 11, 2001. The country was not paying attention. The case disappeared into the machinery of a justice system with other things on its mind. Paul Everett went to death row at twenty-two.

September 11 and the Forgotten Trial

It is impossible to fully account for the atmosphere in which Paul Everett was tried without acknowledging the historical moment. The United States in late 2001 and early 2002 was consumed by fear and grief on a national scale. Attention that might otherwise have scrutinized a capital case in a Florida circuit court was directed elsewhere. The brevity of the trial—its compressed nature, its failure to fully develop the defense—passed without the kind of outside scrutiny that might have prompted questions. The case simply disappeared.

Two Mothers and One Deception

When Paul Everett talks about the verdict, he talks about two mothers: his own, who watches the state prepare to kill her innocent son, and Kelli Bailey's, who has spent more than two decades believing her daughter's killer was punished. Both mothers were deceived. One is waiting for her son to come home. The other has been denied the true reckoning she deserves for what happened to her daughter.

Paul Everett does not harbor negativity toward anyone who stands for Kelli and seeks justice for the bright light that was taken from their world. He understands it completely. But the justice Kelli's family has been promised—the justice they believe was delivered—is not justice. It is misdirection. The man who took Kelli Bailey's life has been living

freely for more than two decades, reportedly telling people he's killed before and that someone else is doing time for it. That is not justice. That is its opposite.

Chapter 9

The Legal Framework: What Florida Law Requires

Rule 3.853 and the Right to DNA Testing

Florida Rule of Criminal Procedure 3.853, enacted pursuant to Section 925.11 of the Florida Statutes, establishes the procedure by which convicted defendants may seek postconviction DNA testing of biological evidence. The rule reflects a legislative and judicial recognition that DNA technology has the capacity to resolve questions of guilt or innocence that were unanswerable at the time of trial.

The legal standard for obtaining DNA testing under Rule 3.853 is not stringent. A defendant is entitled to testing if his motion demonstrates a reasonable probability that he would have been acquitted or would have received a lesser sentence if the DNA evidence had been admitted at trial. In making this assessment, the allegations in the sworn motion must be taken as true. The court's role at this stage is not to predict whether the results will be exculpatory. It is to determine whether, if the results are exculpatory, they would create a reasonable probability of a different outcome.

Paul Everett's motion checked every box. It identified the specific items to be tested. It confirmed they remained in law enforcement's possession. It stated they had never been tested for DNA. It noted the State's specific trial argument—we don't have anybody else's DNA—as the argument that testing would directly undermine. And it provided a detailed explanation of how Farmer's DNA in Kelli's hands would lead to a reasonable probability of acquittal or a lesser sentence.

The Circuit Court's Error

The circuit court denied Paul Everett's motion without a hearing. Its reasoning rested on a single premise: Even if DNA testing revealed Farmer's DNA at the scene, that would not demonstrate that Everett was absent. Since the State could still argue Everett was present as a principal, the court reasoned, the DNA evidence would not produce a reasonable probability of acquittal.

This reasoning fails on multiple levels. It ignores the jury instructions Everett would have been entitled to if Farmer's DNA established him as a co-perpetrator: a principals instruction requiring the jury to find that Everett specifically intended the murder and an independent act instruction permitting acquittal on the murder charge if the killing was Farmer's independent act. It ignores the impact on the penalty phase, where physical evidence that Farmer was the actual killer would directly undermine the findings required for a death sentence under *Enmund v. Florida* and *Tison v. Arizona*. It ignores the impact on the confession, which the court itself acknowledged would be shown to be at least partially false. And it ignores the context of the prosecution's central argument, which was built on the premise that no one else's DNA was present, a premise that only held because the State never tested the evidence that might have disproved it.

The State's Argument and Why They Fail

The State has argued that the cases supporting DNA testing, *Cardona v. State* and others, involved living victims who could testify about the significance of the DNA. Kelli Bailey is dead, the State argues, so these cases don't apply.

This argument is self-defeating. Kelli Bailey is dead because someone killed her. If that someone was Jared Farmer, then Farmer eliminated the very witness who could speak to what happened. The State cannot

benefit from the silence created by the crime itself. The absence of Kelli's testimony is not a reason to deny DNA testing. It is an argument for testing the one witness who cannot be silenced: the physical evidence of Kelli's own body.

The State has also argued that Paul Everett is merely speculating that Farmer's DNA would be present. This argument proves too much. If speculative results can defeat a DNA testing claim, then no postconviction DNA testing claim could ever succeed—because the whole point of testing is that no one knows the result until the laboratory produces one. The legal standard does not require certainty. It requires a reasonable probability that favorable results would change the outcome. Paul Everett has met that standard.

Chapter 10

Two Decades of Injustice: A Timeline

From Indictment to Death Row: 2001 to 2005

January 28, 2002: Paul Everett is indicted for first-degree murder, burglary of a dwelling with a battery, and sexual battery involving serious physical force. Later that year, the case goes to trial in the shadow of September 11. The State tells the jury: We don't have anybody else's DNA. The jury does not know that multiple items of physical evidence, including materials from Kelli's own hands and nails, were never tested. The jury does not know that bounty hunters had Everett under surveillance all day on November 2. The jury does not know about the medical procedure Kelli had three days before her death. The jury does not know that Paul and Kelli had a prior relationship, or that four people were in that house on November 1.

The jury returns guilty verdicts on all counts. The verdict is a general verdict; the jury does not specify whether they found Everett guilty of premeditated murder or felony murder. At the penalty phase, the jury unanimously recommends death. The court imposes the death sentence and two consecutive life sentences. In 2004, the Florida Supreme Court affirms. In 2005, the United States Supreme Court denies certiorari.

The Postconviction Years: 2006 to 2020

In 2006, Paul Everett files his first motion for postconviction relief. After an evidentiary hearing, the circuit court denies relief in 2008. The Florida Supreme Court denies relief on all grounds in 2010. Throughout these proceedings, there is no evidence that postconviction counsel ever independently investigated Jared Farmer's potential role in the murder.

The extensive circumstantial case against Farmer—his knowledge of non-public details, his inconsistent timeline, the untested DNA evidence—is never brought to the courts’ attention.

In January 2017, Everett files a successive postconviction motion in light of *Hurst v. Florida*. Relief is denied. The Florida Supreme Court affirms in 2018.

In October 2020, Everett files a successive motion based on newly discovered evidence that Jared Farmer was the person who actually killed Kelli Bailey. The circuit court denies the motion without prejudice, noting that counsel was not death-qualified. The circuit court appoints Capital Collateral Regional Counsel—North (CCRC-North).

CCRC-North and the DNA Testing Motion: 2020 to Present

CCRC-North undertakes a comprehensive review of the record, the kind of review that specialized postconviction capital counsel is specifically trained to perform. It is the first time in more than two decades that Paul Everett has had counsel with the training, resources and mandate to genuinely investigate what happened. The reviewing attorney notes explicitly that Paul Everett had never had the opportunity to have his case independently reviewed and investigated by a defense team specifically trained in postconviction litigation until that point.

What CCRC-North finds is damning: Significant physical evidence from Kelli’s person was submitted for expedited analysis in November 2001 and never tested for DNA. Jared Farmer’s known DNA standard was submitted at the same time as that evidence and was apparently never used for comparison purposes. Everett files a sworn motion for postconviction DNA testing.

The circuit court denies the motion without a hearing. Everett files a motion for rehearing, which is denied on April 19, 2023. His appeal to the Florida Supreme Court, Case No. SC2023-0721, was briefed in 2023. As of the writing of this book, the Florida Supreme Court has not yet issued its ruling. The outcome of that decision may determine whether Paul Everett lives or dies.

Chapter 11

The Morality of Finality

When Finality Becomes an Excuse

Courts across the country speak often of finality as a value in the criminal justice system. There are genuine reasons to value finality: Victims deserve closure; the system's legitimacy depends on the enforceability of its judgments; the resources of courts and law enforcement are finite.

But finality is not an end in itself. It is a tool in service of justice. When finality conflicts with justice, when the machinery of finality is used not to protect a legitimate conviction but to insulate an unjust one, it has exceeded its proper role.

In Paul Everett's case, the State's insistence on finality requires arguing, implicitly, that we should never know whether the right man is on death row, because answering that question might require reversing a conviction. That is not a principled defense of finality. It is finality as a shield against the facts.

As Paul Everett's legal team has argued before the Florida Supreme Court: Because this is a capital case, finality will result in the execution of Kelli Bailey's killer. That execution will be carried out in the name of the State of Florida and its citizens. It is therefore morally imperative—and should be legally imperative—that the right man be executed. The answer to who killed Kelli Bailey may be found through postconviction DNA testing. The Court should permit that testing to ensure justice not only for Mr. Everett, but for all the citizens of the State of Florida.

The Risk of Executing an Innocent Person

The United States has executed people who were almost certainly innocent. The cases of Cameron Todd Willingham in Texas and Troy Davis in Georgia stand as sobering reminders that the system is not infallible, that convictions built on coerced confessions and incomplete investigations can become irreversible through the grinding process of appeals time that the one irreversible act of all—execution—can be taken before the full facts are known.

DNA evidence has exonerated hundreds of people in the United States since the first DNA exoneration in 1989. Among those exonerees, many had been convicted on the strength of confessions that were later shown to be false. Dozens of people sentenced to death have been exonerated through DNA evidence.

Paul Everett's case presents a unique variant of this pattern. It is not simply that exculpatory evidence exists and has been ignored. It is that the evidence whose existence could resolve the question of guilt was never tested: deliberately left unanalyzed after law enforcement decided they already had their man. The untested materials still exist. They are in law enforcement's custody. The analysis could be done today. The answer is available. It has simply not been sought.

Justice for Kelli

No account of this case can be complete without acknowledging that Kelli Bailey was a real person—a bright light, as those who loved her describe her—who was brutally murdered. She deserves justice. Her family deserves to know that her killer has been held accountable.

But justice for Kelli requires that the right person be held accountable. If Jared Farmer killed her, if his DNA is found in the very hands she raised to defend herself as she died, then no justice has been done for Kelli at

all. The person who ended her life has walked freely for more than two decades, reportedly telling people he has killed before and that someone else is doing his time. That is not justice.

Testing the biological evidence from Kelli's hands and nails is not an act of disrespect to her memory. It is the last, most powerful act of respect: allowing her own body to finally reveal what happened to her.

Paul Everett does not harbor negative feelings toward the people who have stood for Kelli and sought justice for what was done to her. He understands them completely. He knows that they have been shielded from the full record of this matter. He wants them to have the facts—the real facts, not the convenient version that has been allowed to calcify over twenty years while the actual perpetrator lives free.

Chapter 12

What the DNA Testing Could Reveal

Scenario 1: Farmer's DNA is Found

If postconviction DNA testing of the materials from Kelli's hands, nails and arm were to reveal Jared Farmer's DNA profile, the implications would be profound.

The presence of Farmer's DNA under Kelli's nails and in hairs or tissue clutched in her hands would establish, with near certainty, that Farmer was in violent physical contact with her around the time of her death. There is no innocent explanation for this evidence. Farmer had no relationship with Kelli Bailey that would explain his biological material in her defensive clutch.

This finding would corroborate every element of the circumstantial case against Farmer: his knowledge of nonpublic details, his false statement about the fish billy, his mother's timeline placing his panicked phone call around the time of Kelli's death, his pattern of criminal conduct mirroring this exact type of crime, his statements to multiple people about having killed before. Combined, Farmer's DNA in Kelli's hands would constitute an overwhelming case for his guilt.

For Paul Everett, this finding would establish that his confession, in which he told law enforcement that Farmer was not present, was false in a material respect—as it was, because he said that to protect himself and his family from Farmer's threats. It would demonstrate that the State's central trial argument was built on evidence the State chose not to test. It would entitle Everett to jury instructions he never received. And it would provide mitigation at the penalty phase that points directly to Farmer

as the actual killer, potentially sparing Paul's life even if a jury were to convict him of some lesser role.

Scenario 2: Farmer's DNA is Not Found

If testing does not reveal Farmer's DNA, that result does not prove his innocence. Absence of a profile can reflect degradation, limited transfer, or the limits of any particular test. But it also does not change the legal analysis of whether testing should be permitted. The legal standard does not require certainty of exculpatory results. It requires a reasonable probability that favorable results would lead to acquittal or a lesser sentence. Paul Everett has met that standard. What the laboratory finds is the laboratory's answer to a question that courts should not resolve by refusing to ask.

What Testing Would Cost

DNA testing of biological evidence in law enforcement custody costs a fraction of what has already been spent on two decades of litigation over Paul Everett's sentence. The State of Florida has spent vast resources pursuing this death sentence through direct appeal, multiple postconviction proceedings, and now this appeal. The cost of testing the evidence—evidence that law enforcement collected and preserved precisely because it might be evidentiary—is minimal by comparison. The question is not whether Florida can afford to test this evidence. The question is whether Florida can afford not to.

Conclusion

A Last Chance for Justice

Paul Everett is forty-seven years old. He has been on Florida's death row for more than two decades. He has been through a direct appeal, a certiorari petition to the United States Supreme Court, a first postconviction proceeding, a Hurst motion, a newly discovered evidence motion, and now a DNA testing appeal. Throughout all of these proceedings, one question has never been answered: Whose biological material is in Kelli Bailey's hands?

That question has not been answered because no one has ever asked the laboratory to answer it. Law enforcement collected the evidence. The State submitted it for expedited analysis. The analyst was told the suspect was Paul Everett. After Everett's DNA was found in the swab results—DNA entirely explained by a prior relationship between two people who knew each other—the systematic testing stopped. The evidence from Kelli's hands and nails—the evidence most directly connected to the physical act of her killing—was never tested, never compared to Jared Farmer's known DNA standard, never used to answer the most basic question in any murder case: Who did this?

The circumstantial case against Jared Farmer is compelling by any objective measure. He was untruthful with law enforcement. He knew details of the crime that no innocent person could have known. His mother's timeline places his panicked phone call right around the moment of Kelli's death. His pattern of violent criminal conduct mirrors the crime against Kelli with eerie precision. He was standing over Kelli Bailey on the night of November 1, 2001, and Paul Everett saw it. He has reportedly told people, in the years since Everett's conviction, that he killed someone and someone else is doing time for it. He killed Kelli Bailey on November 2, 2001.

The circumstantial case against Paul Everett, while real, is built in part on a coerced confession extracted through death threats from a law enforcement officer and terror of Farmer's people; in part on DNA evidence that reflects a prior relationship between two people who knew each other, nothing more; in part on the State's argument that no one else's DNA was present, an argument that was only true because the State chose not to test the evidence that might have revealed someone else's DNA; in part on a trial that was stripped of the full context of what Paul Everett actually knew, actually saw, and actually did on the night of November 1.

Paul Everett left a woman he cared about in a dangerous situation. That mistake has haunted him every day for more than twenty years. But leaving is not murder. The men who stayed behind made the choice that ended Kelli Bailey's life. Jared Farmer made that choice. Paul Everett did not.

Florida's Supreme Court has the power to order the testing. The question before that Court is whether the state of Florida, before it executes Paul Everett in the name of its citizens, will first answer the question that has been open for more than twenty years.

The evidence is there. The technology is there. The legal standard is met. The bounty hunters who had Paul under surveillance all day on November 2 are there in the record. The medical records are there in the record. The lead sheets documenting the neighborhood paranoia are there. Lt. Lindsey's own words acknowledging his threats are there. Jared Farmer's words—his knowledge, his deceptions, his bragging to people that he killed before and someone else is doing his time—are there.

What remains is the will to pursue justice, even at the risk of discovering that the system was catastrophically wrong.

Kelli Bailey deserves that justice. Paul Everett deserves that justice. Paul's mother, watching the state prepare to kill her innocent son, deserves that justice. Florida's citizens deserve that justice.

The hairs found in Kelli Bailey's hands on the day she died are still waiting to speak. So is Paul Everett, steady and unbroken on a prison phone line, waiting for someone to finally listen.

Appendix

Key Legal Authorities and Proceedings

Florida Rule of Criminal Procedure 3.853

Rule 3.853 establishes the procedures for postconviction DNA testing in Florida. A defendant is entitled to testing upon demonstrating: (1) that the evidence to be tested exists and is in law enforcement's possession; (2) that the evidence has not previously been subjected to DNA testing, or that the technology used in prior testing was not sufficiently sensitive; (3) that testing is material to the issue of whether the movant committed the offense or received a disproportionate sentence; (4) that there is a reasonable probability that the movant would have been acquitted, or would have received a lesser sentence, if the DNA evidence had been admitted at trial.

The rule specifies that in making its determination, the court shall assume that the DNA testing will be favorable to the movant. This provision exists to prevent courts from denying testing by predicting that the results will be unhelpful. The question for the court is not whether the results will be exculpatory—no one can know that without doing the test—but whether exculpatory results, if they materialize, would have a reasonable probability of changing the outcome.

The Governing Case Law

Overton v. State

In *Overton v. State*, the Florida Supreme Court addressed the standard for postconviction DNA testing in a capital case. The Court distinguished between biological evidence with a clear nexus to the crime, such as fingernail scrapings from a murder victim, and biological

evidence whose connection to the crime is ambiguous. The Court approved testing of the former and denied testing of the latter. *Overton* is the primary authority for evaluating the nexus requirement in postconviction DNA testing claims, and it supports rather than undermines testing of the materials in Paul Everett's case.

Cardona v. State

In *Cardona v. State*, the Fourth District Court of Appeal granted postconviction DNA testing of hair evidence where the living victim had testified during investigation that she had pulled her attacker's hair out during the assault. The court found this testimony provided the necessary nexus between the hair evidence and the crime, such that exculpatory DNA results would create a reasonable probability of acquittal. The nexus requirement can be satisfied by the circumstances of evidence collection, not just victim testimony—a principle that applies directly to evidence collected from Kelli Bailey's hands and nails.

Enmund v. Florida and Tison v. Arizona

These United States Supreme Court decisions establish the constitutional requirements for imposing a death sentence on a defendant who did not himself commit the murder. Under *Enmund*, a death sentence cannot be imposed on a felony murder defendant who was neither the actual killer nor a major participant who acted with reckless indifference to human life. *Tison* elaborated on this standard. Physical evidence that Jared Farmer was the actual killer would directly undermine the findings required to sentence Paul Everett to death under these constitutional provisions.

The Appellate Proceedings: Florida Supreme Court Case No. SC2023-0721

The appeal in Florida Supreme Court Case No. SC2023-0721 presents three core issues: whether the circuit court erred in denying postconviction DNA testing without a hearing, whether the circuit court's reasoning misapplied the legal standard by requiring near certainty of exoneration rather than a reasonable probability of acquittal or lesser sentence, and whether the circuit court's failure to consider the impact on available jury instructions, on the sentencing phase, or on the credibility of the coerced confession constitutes legal error requiring reversal an order of DNA testing.

Paul Everett's initial brief was filed July 17, 2023. The State's answer brief followed. Everett's reply brief was filed August 7, 2023. As of the writing of this book, the Florida Supreme Court has not issued its ruling.

A Note on Sources

This narrative account is based on two parallel sources of evidence: the court record in Florida Supreme Court Case No. SC2023-0721, including the appendix of record materials filed with the initial brief; and direct conversations with Paul Everett, who has asked that his account be shared, together with the accounts of those closest to him who have verified the details of his narrative.

Where the court record and Paul's direct account converge, the convergence is noted. Where Paul's account provides context that the court record cannot—the nature of his relationship with Kelli Bailey, the events of November 1, the weeks of fear that followed, the circumstances of his confession—that context is drawn from Paul himself and those who know him best.

The record includes the indictment, trial transcripts, the jury's verdict and sentencing recommendation, the trial court's sentencing order, the Florida Supreme Court's opinion on direct appeal, the first postconviction motion and related proceedings, the Hurst motion related proceedings, the October 2020 newly discovered evidence motion, CCRC-North's review, the sworn motion for postconviction DNA testing, the State's response, Everett's reply, the circuit court's order denying testing, the motion for rehearing its denial, and the briefs filed in the Florida Supreme Court on appeal.

The account of Jared Farmer's statements and law enforcement's investigation draws on law enforcement interview summaries, witness statements, and investigative reports submitted as exhibits to the postconviction proceedings. The lead sheets submitted by Lt. Chad Lindsey, documenting neighborhood witness accounts from November 3, 2001, are among those exhibits and are specifically referenced in this account. Lt. Lindsey's own statements acknowledging the threats he made during Paul Everett's interrogation are also part of that record.

The victim is referred to by initials or first name consistent with the practice in the court filings and out of respect for her family. Other witnesses are referred to as they appear in the public record. Law enforcement witnesses, attorneys and the defendant are identified by full name.

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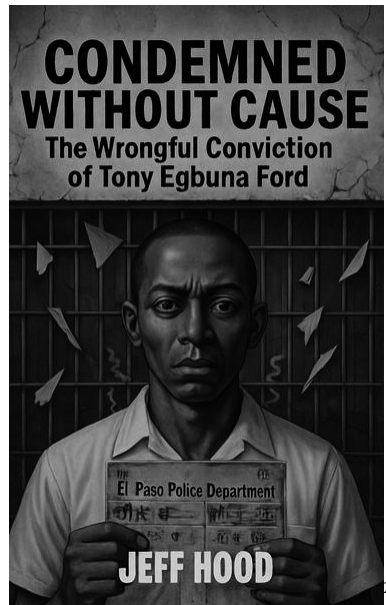
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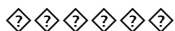
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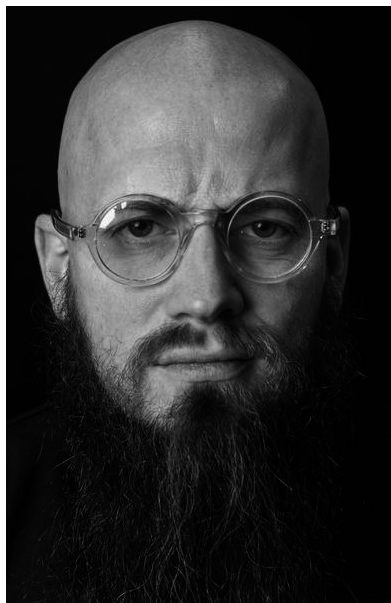
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About the Author

The Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood is a theologian and spiritual advisor to death row inmates nationwide. He has accompanied over a dozen men to their executions and was the first spiritual advisor to be present for a nitrogen hypoxia execution. Rev. Hood has been profiled widely, including in the Rolling Stone documentary *The Spiritual Advisor*. He is the Founder of the Execution Intervention Project.

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