

TOO OLD TO KILL

*Writings On the Execution of Dusty Ray
Spencer*

Jeff Hood

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Spencer

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Published by Complicit Press, 2026.

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TOO OLD TO KILL: WRITINGS ON THE
EXECUTION OF DUSTY RAY SPENCER

First edition. July 1, 2026.

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ISBN: 979-8235649002

Written by Jeff Hood.

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The Case Against Executing Dusty Ray Spencer

Scheduled to Be Executed on June 25, 2026, at Florida State Prison — A Comprehensive Argument for Mercy

June 8, 2026

Introduction: A Life Worth Reconsidering

Dusty Ray Spencer, a 74-year-old military veteran, is scheduled to die by lethal injection on June 25, 2026. He has spent more than three decades on Florida's death row. The crime he committed was violent and real. Karen Spencer is dead and nothing will change that. This argument does not deny the gravity of what happened on January 18, 1992.

But gravity of crime is not the only measure of whether a state should take a human life. The question before us now...the question that must be put to anyone with power to intervene...is whether the execution of this particular man, at this particular moment, constitutes justice or whether it constitutes something else: the mechanical completion of a legal process whose foundations were flawed from the beginning.

The record reveals a case riddled with constitutional infirmity, suppressed mitigation, a nonunanimous jury and a man sentenced to die without any jury at all. It reveals a human being whose capacity for violence was inseparable from devastating, documented mental illness and chronic alcoholism that impaired him to a degree that the prosecution's own experts

found compelling...a degree that multiple Florida Supreme Court justices also found compelling. It reveals a 74-year-old man who has served over thirty years, who has lived, aged, changed in ways the legal system is not designed to measure.

What follows is the strongest possible case...grounded in the actual record...for why Dusty Spencer's execution should be stopped.

I. The Death Sentence Was Imposed Without a Jury

This is the most fundamental fact in the Spencer case and the most underappreciated: Dusty Spencer was ultimately sentenced to death without any jury deliberation.

After the Florida Supreme Court vacated his original death sentence in 1994...holding that the trial court had improperly found the cold, calculated and premeditated (CCP) aggravating factor...improperly rejected two statutory mental mitigating circumstances...the case was remanded for reconsideration. What happened next is extraordinary: the trial court resentenced Spencer to death without empaneling a new jury. A judge alone, relying on the existing record, again imposed the ultimate penalty.

Justice Pariente, in her dissent in the Hurst-related proceedings, identified this as the central injustice of the case:

"Spencer's case involves the quintessential Hurst error...a defendant being sentenced to death without

trial by jury, as guaranteed by the United States and Florida Constitutions... Ironically, if this Court had reversed for a new penalty phase rather than remanding the case for ‘reconsideration’ of the aggravation and mitigation by the trial court, Spencer might be entitled to Hurst relief.”

The original jury that did hear penalty evidence recommended death by only a 7-5 vote...a bare majority, five jurors short of unanimity. That narrow, divided recommendation was already constitutionally suspect under the principles the Supreme Court would later articulate in *Hurst v. Florida* (2016). The Florida Supreme Court denied Spencer relief only because his conviction was finalized before the Hurst cutoff date...not because the constitutional problem was any less real in his case.

The United States is executing a man who was never sentenced to death by a unanimous jury...and who, at resentencing, faced no jury at all. The constitutional guarantee of jury determination in capital cases existed as a principle long before Hurst made it explicit. Spencer’s death sentence was built on a foundation that the highest courts of Florida and the United States have since recognized as inadequate.

II. Severe Mental Illness and Chronic Alcoholism Fundamentally Compromised His Culpability

The penalty phase record in the Spencer case is remarkable for what it actually shows: two expert witnesses...a clinical psychologist...a neuropsychopharmacologist...providing

detailed, uncontroverted testimony that Spencer suffered from a paranoid personality disorder with borderline traits, chronic substance abuse dating to early adolescence...an acute biochemical impairment at the time of the murder that rendered his capacity to conform his conduct to the law substantially compromised.

This was not mere defense advocacy. The Florida Supreme Court itself accepted it. In its 1994 opinion vacating the original sentence, the court found that the expert testimony was “uncontroverted” and that the trial court had erred in rejecting it as “speculative and conclusory.” The court specifically found that the experts had based their opinions on “a battery of psychological and personality tests, clinical interviews with Spencer, examination of evidence in this case and a review of Spencer’s life history, school records and military records.”

What those experts found:

- Spencer was sexually abused by his father beginning in early adolescence...precisely the period when he began using alcohol heavily to cope, drinking to intoxication at age fourteen.
- Alcohol abuse during the final years of brain development altered his neurological formation: the chronic drinking during late adolescence interfered with “the final growth interconnectedness of nerves within the brain,” with permanent consequences for how he processed emotion and stress.

- He presented as classically overcontrolled: passive, submissive, emotionally isolated, avoiding conflict at nearly all costs...but with a catastrophic vulnerability under extreme stress to what the psychologist called an “explosion” of dysregulated behavior he could not remember afterward.

- At the time of the murder, his blood alcohol level was technically zero...but as the neuropsychopharmacologist explained in detail, chronic alcoholics in withdrawal do not return to cognitive competency simply because a breathalyzer reads zero. His thinking process was biochemically disordered and the withdrawal from constant heavy drinking compounded his paranoid disorder catastrophically.

- The psychologist testified that Spencer entered a dissociative state during the murder itself...that he “wasn’t even able to remember it” and “wasn’t aware of what he was doing at the time he was doing it.” The experts found this amnesia genuine.

The state never disputed any of this with expert testimony of its own. Its only rebuttal was to cherry-pick quotations and present them out of context...a practice the defense brief documented at length...which the Florida Supreme Court implicitly validated when it found the mitigation real...the original rejection of it erroneous.

In the resentencing, the judge found both statutory mental mitigators to be present. He gave them only “some weight.” He gave the nonstatutory mitigators...including Spencer’s honorable military service, documented sexual abuse as a child and good work record...”very little weight.” The question is not whether mitigation existed. It clearly did and the court acknowledged it. The question is whether the weight assigned to it was constitutionally adequate...and whether a jury, not a judge alone, should have made that determination.

III. The Prosecution and Trial Court Systematically Distorted the Record

The appellate brief filed by Spencer’s public defender, James Wulchak, is one of the most methodically documented records of prosecutorial overreach in Florida capital jurisprudence. Page after page catalogs specific misquotations, decontextualized testimony and outright factual errors in the state’s version of events...errors that migrated from the prosecution’s brief directly into the trial court’s sentencing order.

A non-exhaustive list of documented distortions:

- The state claimed the victim was stabbed “four or five times in the chest.” The medical record shows two penetrating stab wounds to the chest (one to the sternum, one to the lung), with superficial cuts to the face and arms. The trial court’s sentencing order later stated five stab wounds.

- The state claimed the psychologist opined Spencer “had a poor work history.” The actual testimony said Spencer “probably has not achieved to his potential” and “would have a poor work history, relating to his ability”...a nuanced psychological observation about capability versus achievement, not a character attack. The trial court borrowed the state’s distorted version.

- The state claimed psychologist Burch “only spent three hours” with Spencer. She spent two full days...seven hours of psychological testing plus three hours of clinical history...and reviewed police reports, autopsy reports, photographs, witness interviews and work summaries from the neuropsychopharmacologist.

- The state presented “James Butcher, Ph.D.” as a contradicting expert. He is a computer program...a software algorithm for interpreting MMPI data that the neuropsychopharmacologist explicitly testified “may have nothing to do with your client” and “on its own, doesn’t mean anything.” The state sought to put algorithmic output on the same level as two days of clinical evaluation.

- The state characterized Burch as finding Spencer “could have been contemplating” the murder as early as December. Her actual testimony was she could not rule out that he “thought about and fantasized” about it...an enormously different legal and psychological statement and one she specifically distinguished from

premeditated planning, because Spencer's disordered thinking made rational planning impossible.

These distortions were not incidental. They formed the factual foundation for the sentencing court's conclusions. When a death sentence is built on a distorted record, the finality that ordinarily protects judgments becomes an argument for injustice, not for it.

IV. Significant Judicial Dissent Has Consistently Questioned This Sentence

It is not merely advocates who have found the Spencer sentence troubling. Florida Supreme Court justices themselves have repeatedly said so...in opinions attached to the very decisions that affirmed his sentence.

Justice Kogan, in the original 1994 appeal, would have reduced the sentence to life imprisonment outright. He wrote that the strong case for mental mitigation and the absence of cold calculated premeditation made the death penalty disproportionate, drawing a direct comparison to *Santos v. State*...a factually analogous case in which the Florida Supreme Court ultimately reversed the death penalty. He called a remand "a useless act" because, in his view, death clearly could not be proportional.

In the 1996 resentencing appeal, Chief Justice Kogan again dissented, this time as the court's senior member, again finding the sentence disproportionate...citing the trial court's own findings of extreme mental and emotional disturbance,

substantial impairment, paranoid personality disorder, sexual abuse as a child...honorable military service.

And in the most recent chapter...the Hurst-era proceedings...Justice Pariente wrote with particular force that Spencer's case represented the very scenario Hurst was meant to address: a defendant sentenced to death without the constitutionally required jury determination. She would have granted him a new penalty phase.

Multiple justices across multiple decades have looked at this case and said: this is wrong. They were constrained by precedent. Clemency authority is not.

V. Spencer Is 74 Years Old...A Different Man Than the One Who Committed This Crime

Dusty Ray Spencer was 40 years old when he killed Karen Spencer. He is now 74. He has spent more than half of his life on death row.

The psychological profile drawn in his penalty phase...overcontrolled hostility erupting under catastrophic domestic stress, fueled by chronic alcohol abuse that began in adolescence as a response to sexual trauma...describes a person shaped by conditions that can themselves change. He has not had access to alcohol in three decades. He has aged out of the volatile emotional states that the experts identified as his specific pathway to violence. The demographic research on elderly

incarcerated individuals is unambiguous: recidivism rates for men over 65 are among the lowest of any population.

If the mitigating factors at sentencing were real...the Florida Supreme Court said they were...then thirty-four years of additional time, sobriety, aging...institutional structure constitute additional mitigation the original sentencer never weighed and could never have weighed.

There is no public safety argument for this execution. There is no penological purpose served by lethal injection that imprisonment until natural death does not serve equally well for a 74-year-old man in state custody. The only argument for execution at this stage is retributive. That argument must be weighed against everything else in this record.

VI. The Trial's Prosecutorial Misconduct Claims Were Never Fully Remedied

In postconviction proceedings, Spencer raised substantial claims of prosecutorial misconduct at both the guilt and penalty phases. The Eleventh Circuit granted a Certificate of Appealability on the prosecutorial misconduct claims, finding them significant enough to certify for federal appellate review. The Eleventh Circuit ultimately affirmed the denial of relief in 2010...but the fact that federal judges found the claims worthy of certification at all reflects the magnitude of the constitutional questions surrounding his trial.

The record of the trial court's handling of the evidence...the decontextualized expert testimony, the factual errors in the

sentencing order, the prosecution's sustained mischaracterization of the psychological evidence...represents a pattern, not isolated error. The system that produced this death sentence was not operating at its best. It was operating at something considerably less.

VII. Florida's Execution Rate and the Risk of Systematic Error

Florida executed 19 people in 2025...a modern-era record, accounting for 40 percent of all executions in the United States. Spencer would be the eighth execution of 2026, with his warrant signed before the sixth had been carried out. This pace...unprecedented in the post-Furman era...warrants scrutiny.

Speed is not a virtue in capital cases. The constitutional safeguards built into the appellate process exist precisely because the risk of error in death cases is real and the consequences irreversible. A state executing this many people this quickly is a state where the margin of error shrinks with each warrant signed. Dusty Spencer's case...with its documented constitutional infirmities, its judicial dissents, its nonunanimous jury, its resentencing without any jury...is exactly the kind of case that deserves the most careful, unhurried scrutiny, not acceleration.

VIII. The Moral Argument

Beyond the legal arguments, there is a moral argument and it does not require agreement with abolition to make it.

Dusty Spencer was himself a victim before he became a perpetrator. He was sexually abused as a child. He turned to alcohol at fourteen to manage pain he had no other tools to address. That alcohol reshaped his brain during its most formative period. His violence was not random, not predatory, not targeted at strangers. It was rooted in a domestic relationship consumed by conflict, distorted by his paranoid personality disorder...his impaired judgment...culminating in an explosion that his own brain apparently could not record.

None of that excuses what he did. Karen Spencer is dead. Timothy Johnson witnessed his mother's murder as a teenager. Those are irrevocable facts. But a moral accounting does not allow us to consider only half the story. The man who killed Karen Spencer was a broken man, broken by forces that began before he had any capacity to choose them. A state that kills broken people who kill does not necessarily produce justice. It may only produce more killing.

An 74-year-old man...sober for decades, aged past the neurological volatility that the experts identified as his specific pathway to violence...will die by lethal injection on June 25 unless someone intervenes. He will die having been sentenced by a 7-5 jury and resentenced by a judge alone. He will die for a crime whose aggravation the Florida Supreme Court partially rejected and whose mitigation the court partially acknowledged. He will die in a constitutional environment that has since recognized the very flaws in his case as constitutional violations...and denied him relief only on a technicality of timing.

Conclusion: The Case for Intervention

The strongest possible argument to stop the execution of Dusty Spencer is not a single argument. It is the convergence of all of the above:

- He was sentenced to death without any jury at resentencing and by a divided non-unanimous jury in the original proceeding...a constitutional infirmity that post-Hurst Florida has recognized as fatal in other cases.
- Uncontroverted expert testimony established severe mental illness and biochemical impairment at the time of the crime, with the Florida Supreme Court itself finding that the trial court erred in rejecting it.
- The factual record on which his death sentence rests was systematically distorted by the prosecution and adopted uncritically by the sentencing court.
- Multiple Florida Supreme Court justices across multiple decades have found the sentence troubling and would have reversed it.
- He is 74 years old, has been incarcerated for over 34 years and presents no plausible ongoing danger to anyone.
- His execution serves no purpose...deterrence, incapacitation or rehabilitation...that a commuted

sentence of life imprisonment would not equally serve.

Mercy is not forgiveness. It is not exoneration. It is the recognition that justice is something more complicated and more demanding than the mechanical completion of a legal sentence...particularly one built on the foundations that this one was.

The case for stopping this execution is not based on the claim that Dusty Spencer is innocent or that Karen Spencer's death was anything other than a tragedy. It is based on the claim that the process that produced this outcome was constitutionally and morally insufficient, that the man facing execution is not the same man who committed the crime...that killing him on June 25 will not make anything more just...only more final.

If Ron DeSantis Wants Dusty Spencer Dead, Let Him Do It Himself

June 13, 2026

On June 25, the state of Florida intends to kill Dusty Ray Spencer, a seventy-four-year-old Marine veteran who has spent more than thirty-four years on death row. Governor Ron DeSantis signed the warrant. In Florida, the governor signs it personally. So let me make a simple proposal.

If the governor wants this man dead, let the governor kill him.

Not with a signature. Not from an office in Tallahassee. With his own hands.

Let him walk into the chamber at Florida State Prison. Let him look at the old veteran strapped to the table. Let him find the vein. Let him start the line. Let him stand there while the chest rises and then goes still. Let him watch a man die and call it justice to his face.

He will not.

He will be hundreds of miles away. He will let a warden give the order. He will let a technician break the skin. He will let strangers carry the weight of a killing he wanted but would not touch. That distance is the entire point. A man certain enough to end a life should be willing to end it himself. The fact that

no governor is ever willing should tell us something we already know.

This is how the death penalty survives. It survives by spreading the act so thin that no single person has to feel it. The governor signs. The court schedules. The guard straps. The technician injects. Everyone does a small clean piece. No one does the killing. A man ends up dead anyway. The machine is built so that no human hand has to admit what every human hand is doing.

I am not asking the governor to pick up a needle. I am asking him to notice why he never would.

If the thought of doing it yourself turns your stomach, listen to your stomach. It is telling you the truth that the warrant will not. The same hand that signed the order to kill Dusty Spencer can sign a reprieve to spare him. That power belongs to one man. He does not need a court. He does not need the cabinet. He needs only the honesty to admit that ordering a death he would never carry out himself is not justice. It is hiding.

Dusty Spencer is a man, not a case file. He is sick. He is old. He is a Marine who once ran toward the dying to bring them back.

On June 25, the governor will decide whether to kill him from a safe distance or to do the one brave thing his office actually allows.

He can put the pen down.

If not, let him kill Dusty Spencer himself.

The Forgotten Old Man Florida Intends to Kill

June 15, 2026

This morning, Dusty Ray Spencer read his devotion. He reads it every morning. On June 25, Florida intends to take his mornings for good.

I'm his spiritual advisor. I've sat with him. I've prayed with him. I've listened to him talk about a God he believes is still listening. I've also watched the machinery of his death move ever toward him. I keep arriving at the one question Florida refuses to answer. Why?

Dusty is seventy-four. He is sick. He is a Marine who ran rescue missions in the Philippines years before he killed his wife. He has spent thirty-four years on death row. Somewhere in those years, the killer died and a forgotten old man took his place. The state does not care which one it straps down. It only needs the name on the warrant to match.

Twelve jurors heard his case. Five said he should live. Today, that vote would not even reach the number needed for a jury to hand down a death sentence...it now takes eight affirmative votes. The law moved on and forgot him. Dusty was left exactly where the state put him.

None of that slowed the machinery.

Florida killed nineteen people last year, more than in any year since the modern return of the death penalty. Now the insatiable

appetite has turned toward a sick man of seventy-four who has waited in his cell to die since 1992. The state does not pause for his age. It does not pause for the thirty-four years. It asks only whether the paperwork is in order.

The governor calls it justice. He says justice delayed is justice denied. He says the families deserve to have it done quickly, cleanly and efficiently.

I have stood in the room where it is done. I have watched the mechanisms of death. There is nothing efficient about death.

The chamber is small and built for one purpose. The gurney is shaped like a cross. The straps are leather. The witnesses sit behind glass. The condemned man on the table is awake. He sees their faces. He watches the clock. Everyone prays that this is a nightmare that they will wake from.

I have prayed in that room. I know that prayer. I have held the condemned's hand while the state emptied his veins. I have watched political language become a body on a table. Of course, the politicians are always nowhere to be found.

Human flesh always loses.

I am not asking Florida to forget Karen Spencer. She is dead. Her family carries a grief nothing can lift, and nothing the state does on June 25 will lighten it. Killing Dusty will not raise her. It will not heal them. It will not make one Floridian safer. It will only add another name to a list.

Every execution needs hands. A governor to sign. A warden to read the warrant aloud. A team to find the vein. A public willing

to call it ours and then look away. The burden is not the executioner's alone. It is yours. It is mine. It belongs to everyone who lets the next warrant pass in silence.

So let us ask ourselves. Not whether Florida can execute a man. But why it still does. And keep asking until someone in Tallahassee is made to answer. Because I have yet to hear anything that makes sense.

Tomorrow, Dusty will read his devotion again. He will keep reading until Florida decides he has run out of mornings.

The execution of a forgotten old man is not justice. It is killing that we have learned to live with.

The Marine Florida Wants to Kill

June 15, 2026

I am a pacifist. I do not believe in war. I do not believe the answer to violence is ever more violence. I have spent my life arguing that no government holds the right to decide who lives and who dies.

I say that first because what follows might sound like something it's not. I have deep respect for what Dusty Spencer did as a Marine. Not in spite of my pacifism — because of it. The thing I cannot abide is the taking of life. The thing I will always honor is the saving of it. In Dusty's service to our country, he saved lives.

He wore the uniform of the United States Marine Corps. He served in the Philippines. He went where people were dying and brought them back to life. The Corps called it distinguished service. It's more than that. Think about it. Somewhere, there are people who are growing old because a young Marine was brave when it counted.

On June 25, the state of Florida intends to kill that Marine.

Think about what that means. The same nation that sent Dusty Spencer toward danger, that asked him to risk everything for strangers, that pinned honor on his chest, is now preparing to strap him to a table at Florida State Prison and stop his heart. It trained him to pull the dying back from the edge. It is about to walk him to that edge itself — and throw him over.

This is happening in your own community. A jury sentenced Dusty Spencer to death by a vote of seven to five. Under current Florida law, eight votes would be required. Meaning, Dusty could not be sentenced to death by such a vote today.

Five jurors looked at the whole of his life and said he should live. Then, based on multiple errors, the Florida Supreme Court threw that sentence out. On remand, no new jury was ever seated. A judge alone, with no jury at all, sentenced him to die. That is the sentence Florida means to carry out on June 25.

One more time. Understand what it all means. A jury split over killing him. A court erased the result. A single judge imposed death with no jury in the room. A judge acting alone like this would not be allowed today. The law has moved past every step of the verdict about to take his life.

He is seventy-four. He is sick. He has spent more than thirty-four years on death row. Whatever the state believes was once contained inside him is long gone. There is nothing left to protect anyone from. There is only the date.

I am not asking you to forget Karen Spencer. I will not. She is dead and nothing Florida does will bring her back. The crime was real. The grief is real. I hold her in the same hands that hold him. But you cannot honor the dead by manufacturing more death. Killing Dusty Spencer returns nothing to the woman he killed. It only adds a second body to the ledger.

One man can stop this. Governor Ron DeSantis can grant a reprieve. He does not need a court. He needs only the will to look at a dying veteran and decide the state has taken enough.

Dusty Spencer was trained to save lives. He saved them.

Now it is our turn.

Florida no longer needs a reason to kill

June 16, 2026

Dusty Ray Spencer is 74 years old. If Florida executes him, he will become the oldest person the state has put to death in its modern history.

I know what an execution looks like. I have watched it happen twelve different times.

I have stood behind the glass. I have watched a chest rise and fall against the leather, then rise once more, then go still. I have watched men in pressed uniforms move through a rehearsed liturgy of death, checking the straps, checking the lines, checking the clock. I have prayed over a man in the final minutes before the state took his breath. I have carried what I saw out past the razor wire and into my sleep. Every execution now lives in my nightmares.

On June 25, Florida plans to bring me back into that chamber. The man on the gurney will be Dusty Ray Spencer. He will be the thirteenth man I have watched the state kill.

I am not writing to excuse what he did. In 1992, he murdered his wife, Karen Spencer. The pain that crime created is real. The grief Karen's family carries is real. Nothing I write here is meant to diminish either.

But there is more to see. Dusty is 74. His health is failing. His body is breaking down. He has spent more than three decades

behind bars. Florida is not racing to stop a dangerous man loose in the world. Florida is racing a dying man's own body to the grave.

Eight months ago, the state executed Samuel Smithers. He was 72, the oldest execution in Florida's modern history. Eight months. Now the state is ready to break the record it just set.

This is the lesson Florida is teaching. Time, age, sickness, and frailty count for nothing in the machinery of death. Decades can pass. Bodies can deteriorate. Men can grow old behind prison walls. Still the state insists on killing.

What is the killing for?

Karen Spencer will not return. Her family will not be healed by another funeral. No community will become safer. No future crime will be prevented. The only certainty is that one more human being will die at the hands of the state.

When a government will kill even the old, the sick and the dying, punishment has stopped being the reason. The killing has become the reason. That is where Florida stands.

This execution is not inevitable. One man has the power to stop it. Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the warrant that put June 25 on the calendar. The same hand can stay it.

Governor, this moment belongs to you.

You can let Florida set a new record for the oldest man it has ever killed. Or you can decide that a dying 74-year-old is not

someone the state needs to kill. Whichever you choose will carry your name.

For my part, I know where I will be. I will be inside the prison. I will be holding Dusty's hand. I will be praying. I will be hoping that mercy finds its way into a system that has forgotten the word.

Governor, there is still time.

Do not make this execution Florida's next record.

Make it Florida's greatest act of mercy.

The Oldest Among Us

Florida means to execute Dusty Ray Spencer, 74. I keep asking what it means to kill an old man.

June 16, 2026

There is an age at which the world is supposed to soften toward you.

The body that once carried you begins to ask to be carried. The hands shake. The hearing goes. The years pile up behind you like a country you can no longer travel back to. We have gentle names for this season. We call it the twilight. We call it the sunset. We call it going home.

We do not call it the time to be killed.

Dusty Ray Spencer is 74 years old. He has already lived longer than most men who have ever walked this earth. He has spent more than thirty of those years inside a single cage. His liver is giving out. His body is doing what every old body finally does...it is beginning the slow work of letting go. And Florida has decided it cannot wait for that work to finish. The state intends to walk into the last room of an old man's life and end it on a schedule.

I keep asking what it means to do this. Not whether it is legal...it is. Not whether the courts will permit it...they have. I am asking the older question. The human one. What does it mean to be a people who go looking for our eldest and kill him.

There is almost no tribe in the history of our species that did not honor its elders. The old were the ones who remembered. They held the stories, the names of the dead, the way through the famine the young had never seen. To survive into old age was to become a kind of library. You did not burn the library. You gathered around it. You fed it. You listened while you still could.

We know what a good old age is supposed to look like. We have all pictured it for the people we love. A person grows old. Their family stays close. When death arrives, it arrives in its own hour, in a bed and not on a table, beside people who came out of love. We want that ending for our parents. We want it for ourselves. We believe, down in a place we rarely say out loud, that a long life has earned a gentle close.

Florida is assembling the opposite picture. An old man on a table. Strangers at the controls. His time was cut short by people who could have let it run.

Here is what unsettles me most. Dusty is already dying. We are all dying. He is simply closer, and his body knows it. There is a death already moving toward him that no governor signed, and no warrant was scheduled. It would have arrived in its own hour. It would have been his. The state has decided it cannot allow that. It has been decided that even the death of an old man must belong to Florida...and not to God.

That is not justice. Justice does not rush to a deathbed to make certain it gets there first. That is something older and uglier than justice. It is the will to be the one who decides. The hand on every life, including the lives already slipping free.

A people reveals itself in how it treats the ones who can no longer fight back. The child. The prisoner. The old. We are about to learn something about Florida. We are about to learn that there is no threshold it will not step over, no gray head it will not bow, no deathbed it will not climb onto and claim.

I think of the people reading this who are growing older. I think of your hands, your knees, the names that take a second longer to arrive than they used to. I think of the day someone will decide what you are worth once you can no longer do anything for them. Pray it is not a state that decides. Pray it is someone who loves you.

Dusty does not have many people standing between him and that table. He has a few. I am one of them. On June 25, I will be in the room, because no old man should die alone among strangers who came to kill him. If the world will not soften toward him, I can at least refuse to harden.

So what does it mean to kill the oldest man Florida has ever executed?

It means we have forgotten something our oldest ancestors knew in their bones. That old age should carry a person away from the table, not toward it. That the old are not ours to spend. That there is a mercy owed to a man at the end of his road simply because he has reached the end of his road.

I do not know if Florida will remember in time.

I know I will be there either way.

I will be holding the hand of an old man, in the last room of his life, asking the state the question that keeps rolling around in my head...

When did we become a people who slaughter the old?

An Open Letter to Governor Ron DeSantis

June 19, 2026

Governor Ron DeSantis,

You will not be in the room on June 25.

You will sign the warrant. You will not watch it work. You will order the death of Dusty Ray Spencer. You will not see it. You will be somewhere clean. You will be somewhere far.

Somebody has to be there. It will not be you. It will be a team of strangers before dawn. It will be me.

I am Dusty's spiritual advisor. I will stand close by while the state kills him. I know how a body fights what the protocol swears will be gentle. You know none of this. You have built your whole authority on not knowing it.

Let me say plainly the part nobody says. The execution is designed so that no one did it. You sign the paper...you only signed. The warden gives the order...he only followed the warrant. The team pushes the drugs...they only followed the order. Every hand in the chain comes out clean. The man is still dead.

The cowardice of distance is not a flaw in the system. The cowardice of distance is the system. You sit at the head of it.

I am writing to force the paper to transform back into a person. Dusty Ray Spencer is not a docket number. He is a man of seventy-four. He has a face. He has a name. He has hands that have seen seven decades of living.

Governor, sign it. Then walk into the room. Then put your own hand on the thing you ordered. Then watch a seventy-four-year-old man stop breathing because you decided he should. You shouldn't get the luxury of looking away. You should know this man.

Dusty Spencer is a Marine. The state put him in a uniform. The state trained him to kill on its behalf. Now you mean to kill him. And you have never once done the thing you ask the execution team to do.

You alone can stop it. That is Florida law. You hold the power of reprieve in your own hands. You do not need a court. You do not need a vote. The same hand that signs the warrant can stay it. The choice is yours alone. The blood is yours alone.

I have come to know God in that room. Not the God of the prayer breakfast. The God strapped to the table. The man you mean to kill wears the face of the crucified. Every condemned man does. The cross was an execution. You claim that gospel on Sunday...and whenever else it is convenient. You will violate it on Thursday.

There was another governor once. He signed off on a death he did not want pinned to his name. He washed his hands before the crowd. I am innocent of this man's blood, he said. See to it yourselves. History did not remember Pilate as innocent.

History remembered him as the man who held the power to stop the Crucifixion...and washed his hands instead. You do not have to share his verdict.

So here is my offer. I doubt you will take it. Come to Florida State Prison on June 25. Do not send the strangers. Stand where I will stand. Put your hand where theirs would be. Look at Dusty's face, the way I will have to look at it. Then do it yourself. Then live with it the way you ask all of the workers and witnesses to live with it.

I know. You have your excuses. You will not co. You will send a death you refuse to deliver. That is the whole truth of this in a single image. The man who orders the execution is absent from the consequences. The man who opposes the execution is present in the nightmare. A Marine on the gurney between us...

Dusty Spencer has six days. You have the pen.

If you will not do it with your own hands, Governor...do not do it with theirs. Do not do it with mine.

Rev. Jeff Hood

Spiritual Advisor to Dusty Ray Spencer

Founder, Execution Intervention Project

The Man Who Never Knew Peace: Dusty Spencer's Last War

June 19, 2026

Dusty Spencer Never Knew Peace

On June 25, the state of Florida intends to kill a man who has never known peace.

His name is Dusty Spencer. He is seventy-four years old. He has been at war his entire life. Not the way a soldier is...in seasons, with a clean beginning then a clean end. He has been at war the way a man is when the fighting started before he could understand it. The way a man is when the war never once let him go. To see what Florida is about to do, you have to see that its execution is not the first war waged on Dusty Spencer. It is only the last.

Let me walk you through them.

The War in the Cradle

The first war came for him when he was a child.

He did not enlist in it. He did not start it. A child never does. It was waged on him by hands that were supposed to protect him, in the years when a person is least able to defend himself. There is a name for what is done to a child like that. We rarely call it war. But look at the shape of it. A war has a stronger side and a weaker one. A war leaves the weaker one marked for the rest of

his days. By that measure, the first thing that ever happened to Dusty Spencer was a war. He lost it before he could speak.

Something happens to a child raised under fire. The body learns the world is a threat. The nerves learn to brace. The soul learns that love and danger come through the same door. You can grow a man out of that child. You cannot grow the war out of the man. It stays in him. It waits in him. The country that would one day put a rifle in his hands did not give him his first wound. It found a boy already bleeding and decided he would make a good soldier.

The War the Country Sent

Then the country called and Dusty Spencer answered.

He put on the uniform of the United States Marine Corps. He went to the Philippines. He walked toward the danger everyone else was running from. He saved lives...real people, real names he never stopped to collect, who grew old because a young Marine would not leave them behind. The country took the boy the first war had broken and trained him to charge into fire. It made him good at war. It pinned its honor on his chest.

Think about what that is. We find a wounded child, we wait for him to grow, then we hand him a weapon and call it service. We are very good at this. We gather up the people the early wars have already hollowed out and we march them into the next ones. Then we act surprised when they cannot put the fighting down. Dusty Spencer came home with the war still live inside him. The

country that lit that fire in a far-off jungle never stayed to put it out. It never does.

The War That Came Home

I will not lie to you about how this story turns.

The war that was waged on Dusty Spencer did not stay inside him. It came out. A woman is dead. Her name was Karen Spencer. The grief that tore through that family is real and nothing I write will mend it. I hold her. Abolition that forgets the victim is not abolition. It is denial in a clean shirt.

But understand where that violence came from. It did not arrive out of nowhere on the worst day of his life. Nothing ever does. Violence is not born in a man. It is put there. It was put in Dusty Spencer when he was a child too small to refuse it. It was sharpened in him when the country made him a weapon and shipped him to a war. It was left to smolder when they brought him home and walked away. The crime that took Karen Spencer was not a stranger breaking into his life. It was the war he had lived in since birth...reaching, at last, the one closest to him.

This is not an excuse. I am not handing you one. A wound does not erase a death. A history does not return a life. Dusty Spencer did a terrible thing, and a woman paid for it with everything she had. But there is a difference between explaining a thing and excusing it. The state needs you to forget that difference. The state needs the crime to have no past. It needs you to believe Dusty Spencer began on the morning of his worst act and that nothing came before. That is the only way the killing makes

sense. Strip a man of his whole life, and he is easy to put to death. Give him back his whole life, and the truth comes with it. His whole life was war. The crime was one more round of it. The execution will be the last.

The Last War of Dusty Spencer

Now the country has scheduled the last war.

It will be waged on June 25, in a small room with a table and a clock. It will not look like the others. There will be no rifle. There will be no jungle. There will be a gurney, a needle, a set of straps. But make no mistake what it is. It is the final campaign in a war that has hunted this man since he was small. The state means to finish what was begun against him in childhood. It means to do to the old man exactly what was first done to the boy. It means to be the last thing that ever makes war on Dusty Spencer.

And here is the deepest truth under all of it. This room is the throne the whole bloody order kneels to. The death penalty is not one cruelty among many. It is the one that licenses the rest. Once a state may kill a man on a schedule, it may do anything smaller without flinching. Paul said the love of money was the root of all evil. I tell you the root is this...the love of killing, dressed in a robe and renamed the law. Pull up that root and the whole tree dies with it. Leave it in the ground and it will go on bearing the only fruit it knows.

Dusty Spencer Before June 25

I am a pacifist. I do not believe a killing answers a killing. I have spent my life saying no government holds the right to decide who lives. So I can hold all of it at once. The wars done to him. The harm done by him. And I can still tell you the truth...his killing will heal no one.

Five of his jurors looked at the whole of his life and said let him live. The vote was seven to five. In no state in this country could that divided vote send a man to die today. The only thing carrying Dusty Spencer to that gurney is the year on the calendar...and a state that has run out of mercy.

One man can stop the last war with a single sentence. Governor DeSantis can grant a reprieve. He does not need a court. He does not need a cabinet. He needs only the will to look at a wounded old veteran and decide the state has made enough war on him.

Dusty Spencer has been at war since before he could speak.

I pray that somehow he finds peace.

The Child They Are Killing

June 20, 2026

There is a child in this story.

We have forgotten him.

Before Dusty Ray Spencer was a number on a warrant...before he was a mug shot on the evening news...before he was the worst night of his life...he was a boy. He was a boy raped by his father.

Sit with that. Do not move past it. The first hands that should have protected him were the hands that broke him. A father is supposed to be the first shelter a child knows. A father is supposed to be the first picture of God a small person ever sees. Dusty's father was the storm. Dusty's father was the monster a child prays to be saved from.

His father taught him that the strong take what they want. His father taught him that a body is not your own. His father abused him. He could not fight...could not run...could not find help.

There was no one to tell. There was no word for it yet. There was only a boy carrying a weight too heavy for his size...learning the lesson every abused child learns...that no one is coming.

Jesus saved his fiercest warning for this. Better a millstone around the neck...better thrown to the depths of the sea...than to harm one of these little ones. Heaven holds no harsher word. Yet we have built a way forward for the men who do the harming...and saved our needles for the children they ruin.

Dr. Felix Rogers knows the man that boy became. Rogers is a retired cardiologist. Dusty Spencer has been his friend for thirty years. Rogers describes him without flinching...a survivor of sexual abuse by his father who has clawed his way out of the pain and suffering of abuse and addiction. Rogers does not look away from what Dusty did. He looks at what we are about to do. He warns that if we kill a man who has changed...we will find "our own humanity...diminished."

A boy was raped. No one came.

No one came when he was fourteen...when he reached for alcohol to drown what he had no words to say.

No one came when the drinking rewired a brain still being built.

No one came when the wound hardened into a man.

The state came only at the end. The state came with a needle.

We have to say the hard thing. Karen Spencer is dead. Her son watched her die. None of that is erased. None of that is small.

But a moral people does not read half a life and call it the whole.

The courts saw the abuse. The courts called it real. The courts named it mitigation...then gave it very little weight.

Understand what that means. Dusty Spencer was sentenced long before any jury met. He was sentenced in a child's bedroom. He was sentenced by the man who made him. The verdict came down before he could vote...before he could leave...before he

could name what had been taken from him. Florida did not begin his dying. Florida is only finishing it.

Consider what it is to execute a man who was sexually abused as a child. It is to fail him twice. It is to abandon the boy...then finish the man. It is to say the same society that would not shield the child will not spare the elder. It is to decide the wound he was given counts for less than the wound he became.

This is the oldest machinery we have. We find the one already broken. We pile our disorder onto his back. We kill him to feel clean.

There is a child in this story.

We are about to kill him.

Sleepless in Florida: Dreams and Nightmares

June 23, 2026

I did not sleep last night. I kept thinking about Dusty Ray Spencer. His execution is coming quickly. I feel it in my bones. I lay down like a man lies down on a fault line. I knew the ground was going to move. I just did not know when. I closed my eyes the way you close a door you cannot lock. The dark came in anyway.

God came in with it. Then God left. Then God came back. All night long, the Lord traveled in and out of my consciousness. There is one breath. Gone the next. I reached into the black for him. I came back with a fistful of shadows.

At eleven o'clock, I was still telling myself I would sleep. By midnight, I had stopped lying. Preparing for an execution is like building a dam you know is going to break. You gather the stones. You pack the mud. You raise the wall against a flood already on its way. The whole time, you know the truth. The dam will not hold. The water will not wait. You just don't know whether you will survive what you built. So you lie in the dark and do the long arithmetic of the nights before the killing. You count the hours. You subtract them. The answer always comes out the same. Thursday.

Somewhere around one o'clock, I thought about how little I know him. I do not know what Dusty was like as a boy. I do not know his mother's voice. I know he is seventy-four. I know he

wore the uniform of this country. I know the state of Florida has measured him for the gurney the way a tailor measures a man for a suit. I let the smallness of my knowing sit on my chest. So little. And still enough to keep me awake. Still enough to make me weep.

At two o'clock, the questions came in their robes. Why give him so much? Why empty yourself for a man you barely know? Why lose the sleep? Why carry a man you cannot save? Why stand in the path of the water for a stranger? The questions paced the room like prosecutors. They wanted a confession. I gave them one. Because there is no other way to be moral. Because there is no other way to know God.

Three o'clock. The hour of death. The hour of abandonment. I stood at the window. The parking lot was empty. The road was empty. The night held its breath. And somewhere down that road, a man sat in a cell with a date attached to his name. I know that waiting. I have read the gospel. I know what happens when the state decides a body belongs to history. This week, they have him in Florida. This week, they have him close enough that I will not sleep.

This is Gethsemane. It is always Gethsemane. The garden never closed. The hour never passed. Somewhere, a man is sweating in the dark, asking for the cup to pass. Somewhere, the rest of us are supposed to stay awake. Could you not watch for one hour? I am trying, Lord. I stood at the window and tried to watch. I am asleep and awake at the same time. Awake and useless. Useless and faithful. Keeping the only vigil I know how to keep. A tired

man at a dark window holding a country accountable to a God it does not fear.

Around five o'clock, my body finally betrayed me into a thin gray sleep. It was not rest. It was a flinch. I dreamed of a clock I could not stop. I dreamed it was already Thursday. I woke with my heart pounding like a fist on a door.

Then, the first gray light opened in the east. I have never hated a sunrise the way I hate them now. Dawn is supposed to be merciful. Out here, dawn keeps time for death. Every light that comes up brings him one day closer to the day there will be no more.

So, I will not sleep. I will not eat right. I will not be right. Not until it is over. Not even then. I will build the dam knowing it breaks. I will keep watch, knowing dawn keeps coming. I will love a man I barely know...because love does not check papers first. This is how I stay human in a country that kills by appointment. This is how I know God, while the state pretends to be God. You go to the garden. You stay in the garden. You let the water come. And when it breaks...let it break you open instead of breaking you apart.

And still the night is not done with me. I drift off for a moment. Before I wake, I am in the chamber. Every time, I am standing where I will stand on Thursday. I see the room. I see the gurney. I see his face. I try to scream. No words come out. Then I wake. The chamber is gone.

The chamber is always coming. Sleep does not carry me away from the killing. Sleep carries me straight into it.

So I am asking you...stay awake with me. Do not roll over. Do not look away. Do not let me keep this watch alone. Pray for Dusty Ray Spencer.

He needs us now.

And we need him too.

Strange Meets Stranger : The Day Before An Execution

June 24, 2026

I am at the window. The first light is coming up now. Today, I meet Dusty Ray Spencer for the first time. Tomorrow, I will watch the state of Florida kill him.

Somewhere out there is the road I will drive today. At the end of the road is a cell. In the cell is a man I have to meet and then bury inside the same week. I stand here and look toward him. I cannot see him. I look anyway.

I have walked eleven men to their deaths. I should be used to the first meeting by now. I am not. You never get used to it. Every man is a country you have never visited. Every man is a language you do not speak yet. Today, I cross the border into a man. Tomorrow, they will close that country forever.

Think about what I am asking my heart to do this week. Meet a man. Love a man. Bury a man. The world takes years to make a friend. I am given hours. The world lets a friendship ripen on the vine. Mine is harvested green.

I stand at the window and try to picture him. The glass gives me nothing back but my own tired face. I cannot. I do not know if Dusty is tall. I do not know if his hands shake. I do not know if he will look at me like a lifeline or like one more stranger sent to manage his dying. I build a hundred faces for him. I don't know if any are right. Today, the real one will erase them all.

What do you say to a man on the morning you meet him and the eve of his killing? Hello is too small. I am sorry is a lie dressed up as comfort. I am here for you is a promise I have to be strong enough to keep. I have rehearsed the first words in the car a hundred times. They always sound like a man reaching for words too big for his mouth. So maybe I say nothing at first. Maybe I just sit. Maybe the first thing I give Dusty is a witness that will not flinch.

I am afraid I will not be enough. That is the truth hiding under all the other truths. A man is drowning. They are sending him a priest broken by chambers inhabited before. What do I have? I have no pardon in my pocket. I have no key to his cell. I have no power to stop the execution. I have a collar, a Bible and a stubborn refusal to let him die alone. That is all of it. Let that be enough.

I keep thinking about what to bring. As if the right object in my hands could carry what my mouth cannot. There is nothing to bring. You do not get to bring things to the foot of a cross. You bring yourself. You bring eyes that will not turn away. You bring hands that will hold his when the hour comes. You bring a body willing to stand in the room the whole world refuses to enter.

Today, I will get in the car and drive a road I have learned to hate. A guard will take my name, and a door will open. On the other side, a man I have never met will become, in the space of one breath, amongst the most important people I will ever know. That is the strange arithmetic of this work. These friendships cut the deepest. The men I am given the least time to know are the ones who never leave.

Do I have any hope? I do. It is a strange and stubborn kind. I am a man in a field watching a meteor hurtle toward the earth. I know where it lands. I know when it lands. Doom is all but certain. And still I keep my eyes on the sky for another ending. I will not bury Dusty before they do. I keep hope against the dawn.

The Garden of Gethsemane & The Execution of Love

June 25, 2026

The night is gone. I begged God to spare me from this day. The sun came up anyway. This evening, they will kill my friend, Dusty Ray Spencer. They won't even wait for the dark. They will do it in the daylight, at the supper hour, while the rest of the state sits down to dinner. So, we have one more day to live through. It will be the longest day we have ever experienced together.

I have read the gospel my whole life. I thought I understood the garden. I did not. You do not understand Gethsemane until you have knelt in it with someone and discovered there is no language left. Last night, in the darkness, I knelt there with Dusty. The gospel says Jesus sweated blood. For years, I treated that line like poetry. Now I know better. There are nights when fear pushes so hard against the body that sorrow finds a way out through the skin. Though separated by miles, two men in the dark. One prayer between us. Let this cup pass.

I'm supposed to be the steady one. The one who has done this enough times to keep his hands from shaking. Today, my hands will not stop. I have been sweating his sweat. I have been breathing his fear. I have been watching the same clock and hating it the same way he does. Dread does not stop at the prison gate. It does not check your collar at the door. It comes for the priest the same way it comes for the prisoner. We have been awake in the same garden all night, two men praying one prayer.

This evening, only one of us dies. The other does not walk out whole. He leaves a piece of himself in that room and spends the rest of his life learning to live without it.

There is a name for the piece that gets left behind. It is the wound you take when you stand in the presence of something your soul knows is evil...and you cannot stop it. It is not fear. Fear is for the body. This is for the conscience. It is the monster that moves in once the witnessing is done. It does not roar. It waits. It feeds on the soul. I have carried this monster eleven times now. This evening it feeds again. This evening it learns Dusty's name. There is no medication for watching the unforgivable and surviving it. There is only the monster. The monster never leaves. It just makes room for more.

I cannot finish the prayer the way Jesus finished it. He said, "Not my will but yours be done." I cannot pray like that. This cup is not from God. God did not measure Dusty for the gurney. God did not sign the warrant. God did not set the clock. The state did. So, I prayed the first half of Gethsemane all night with everything I had. Let this cup pass. And I refused the second half with everything I had left. There is no "thy will be done" owed to an executioner. The will being done this evening is not the Father's. It is Florida's.

A few days ago, I did not know his face. This morning, I cannot stop seeing it. That is the thing nobody tells you about this work. You think the horror is watching a stranger die. It is not. The horror is discovering he is no longer a stranger. I know him now. I know his voice. I know the silence that falls when fear enters a room. I know the look that comes over a man's face when he

realizes time has become smaller than hope. I came to give him faith. This week he has been giving me his. They sentenced him to death. Somewhere in the fine print, they sentenced me to be devastated by his absence. We met as strangers. We part as something language does not know how to name. The language of love often fails at defining the undefinable.

He is just Dusty. And this evening, Dusty is to be murdered at the appointed hour.

I keep looking at the clock the way people look at wounds. I cannot stop the hands. I never have. I will spend this day watching the sun move toward the hour they have chosen. When the hour comes, a door will open. They will walk him down a hallway that only goes in one direction. I have walked that hallway. Every man I entered with stayed behind. I carried their names out. This evening, I will walk beside Dusty. That is what I have left. I cannot stop what they mean to do. I can only refuse to let him face it alone.

Sleep felt like desertion. All night a man sat in a cell with his own death. The only thing guaranteed to watch him was a camera that cannot love him. He deserved one set of eyes that could. He had mine through the dark. He has mine through this day.

The cup is still full. This evening they mean to make him drink it. So I will stand close enough to catch him when he falls. That is the last promise I have left to give. I cannot get him out of the garden. I can only get down in it with him. The hour of our demise is near.

The Horror of Love: What Happens to The Soul of A Priest During and After An Execution

June 26, 2026

The horror finds you.

Initially, it finds you while you're working. You have a hand to hold. You have love to speak into a dying ear. You have a face to keep from breaking so that the man strapped down has one steady thing to look at while they kill him. You are praying. You are present. You are doing the only thing left to do. And it finds you anyway. It does not wait until you are finished. It does not wait until you are alone. There is no wall between the work and the horror...there never was...you feel it land in your body in the same breath you pray.

Then you leave that room.

The horror finds you again at night. It finds you when the lights are off, and the room is quiet...when there is no one left to be strong for. It finds you in the dark behind your own eyes. It finds you the way the tide finds the shore...slow and certain...without mercy. You lie down. You think you are tired enough to sleep. Then the gurney is in the room with you. The straps tighten. Then his face is in the room and it is doing the horrible things his face did at the end...you cannot make it stop. It finds you in the dark behind your own hardened eyes.

You watched a man be killed today. You did nothing.

That is the sentence the night reads back to you. You watched and you did nothing. You had no key to the door. You had no power over the warden. You had no injunction in your pocket and no stay in your hand. You had a prayer. You prayed it. The machine did not care about your prayer. The machine had a schedule. The poison ran on time. You stood there...touching him...and you were helpless as a child.

This is the part they do not warn you about. They do not tell you that to be present is to be powerless. They do not tell you that love makes the horror worse. A stranger could have walked out of that room and slept. You knew his voice. You knew his fears. You knew his hopes. You knew how he had changed. You loved him. That is why the night will not let you go. You do not grieve a stranger like this. You grieve someone you loved and could not save.

And then comes the worst of it. Then comes the verdict the dark has been waiting all night to deliver.

You are guilty.

You are guilty because you were there and it happened anyway. You are guilty because your body was in the room and your body did not stop it. You are guilty because part of you knows that to witness a killing and survive it is to be marked by it. You did not pull the lever. You are guilty. You did not write the law. You are guilty. You did not seat the jury...sign the warrant...mix the drugs. You are guilty. The night does not care about your innocence. The night has seen what you have seen and the night knows there is no such thing as a clean witness.

You are complicit...whether you like it or not. That is the thing your guilt knows. We are a people who kill. We kill in our own names. We kill with our own dollars. We kill behind glass so that we do not have to watch and we call that civilization. You watched. You let yourself be marked. You carry tonight the witness of a murder. Your guilt is the guilt of all of us...and you are the only one awake to feel it.

The horror will visit for a long time and some of it will never fully leave. Let it stay. Let it do its work. A man who can watch a killing and sleep soundly is a man the killing has already captured. Your sleeplessness is your refusal. Your horror is your love still beating. Your guilt is the last evidence that you are human in a machine desperate for you not to be.

The chamber gave you a job. The night gives you another one. Survival.

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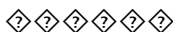
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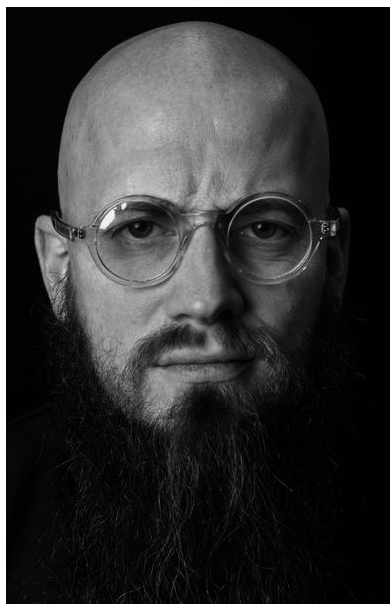
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About the Author

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.

Read more at <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jeffhood/>.

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