

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT
IS A MOCKERY
OF JUSTICE

THE ABOLITION CLASSICS

The texts that built the case against the death penalty

V. 25

CAPITAL
PUNISHMENT
IS A MOCKERY
OF JUSTICE

Rochester, 1858

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Edited and Modernized by

JEFF HOOD

THE ABOLITION CLASSICS

V. 25

COMPLICIT PRESS

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The address was delivered at City Hall, Rochester, New York, on 7 October 1858. It was first reported in the *Rochester Union and Advertiser*, 8 October 1858, and printed in fuller form by the speaker in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 15 October 1858.

The resolutions of the meeting follow the text as printed in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 15 October 1858.

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THE DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION CLASSICS

V. 25

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FOREWORD

Seventeen hundred people packed City Hall in Rochester on the night of October 7, 1858. Most of them came to shout.

They came because handbills had gone up that morning telling the friends of the gallows to show up without fail. They came to hiss a woman who was trying to call a meeting to order. They came to throw the word *white* at a Black man standing at the front of the room, and to see what it did to him.

I know that room. I have been in it.

Different state. Different century. Same air. I have stood in prison parking lots where one side sings and the other side honks. I have watched people bring lawn chairs. I have watched people bring children. Fifteen minutes before the state kills somebody there is always a man with a sign who wants you to know he is glad.

Douglass stood in that. And what he said in the middle of it is the thing I keep coming back to.

Murder is not the cure for murder.

That is the whole argument. It fits on a strip of paper. Everything else in this little book is scaffolding around those eight words... the statistics, the story of the forgers caught passing false notes with their friend's corpse still warm in the room, the careful theological labor of the resolutions. All of it is holding up one sentence.

I have witnessed thirteen executions. I have never once seen the cure. I have only ever seen the wound made twice.

There is a thing Douglass does here that almost nobody does anymore. He does not argue that Ira Stout is innocent. He says the jury thought him guilty, the community said he was guilty, and that he has not come to impugn anybody's motives. He grants the whole case. And then he says it

anyway... and still you must not kill him.

That is a harder position to hold than innocence. Innocence is a door out of the room. Mercy has no door. Mercy just stands there and takes it.

We have gotten worse at this. Abolition in America now runs almost entirely on the wrongly convicted, and thank God for that work. I have done that work. I will keep doing that work until I am in the ground. But an argument built only on innocence hands the gallows everybody else. Douglass would not hand it over. He stood in a room full of people screaming at him and refused to give them a single guilty man.

The other thing. He kept saying *free speech* over the noise. People have found that strange. A man being shouted down insisting on the right of the shouters to be in the building. It is not strange at all. He understood that the crowd that wanted Stout dead and the crowd that wanted him silent were one crowd, and that you do not beat them by becoming them.

Ira Stout hanged on the twenty-second of October. It took him about ten minutes to die. The rope did not break his neck. He strangled in the garret of the county jail while the machine that was supposed to jerk him upward did its work badly, and a hundred invited guests watched him do it.

Read that again. A hundred invited guests.

Douglass lost. Anthony lost. The petition went to Governor King and came back with nothing in it. There is an unmarked grave in Section D at Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester, and in that same ground, eventually, Douglass. And Anthony. All three of them under the same city. Only one of them put there by the state.

I am not publishing this because it worked. I am publishing it because it is true, and because we are still losing, and because somebody has to keep saying the eight words until they take.

Murder is not the cure for murder.

*The Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood
North Little Rock, Arkansas
2026*

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE SPEAKER

Frederick Douglass was forty years old in the autumn of 1858 and had lived in Rochester for eleven years. He printed his newspaper there. He hid people there. The city knew exactly who he was, which is part of why the room behaved the way it did.

He was not on the program that night. By his own account he had come in only to hear what was said. The chairman the organizers had chosen failed to appear, and Douglass was asked to preside over a meeting he had walked into as a spectator. Few episodes better display the range of his reform commitments, or the plain physical courage of them, than the hour that followed.

THE MEETING

More than thirty area reformers had called the meeting to protest the coming execution of Ira Stout, a convicted murderer scheduled to hang on October 22. On the morning of the seventh, handbills appeared around Rochester urging supporters of capital punishment to attend *without fail*. By eight o'clock a promiscuous crowd of perhaps seventeen hundred had jammed the hall.

Susan B. Anthony, one of the chief organizers, called the meeting to order into a barrage of hisses and insults. A chorus of racial taunts greeted Douglass when he took the chair. The *Rochester Democrat and American* reported that he appeared undismayed and stood his ground with smiling equanimity. Lucy N. Colman wrote that his voice carried above the noise of the mob. The reporter for the *New York Daily Tribune* disagreed, saying

he could catch only intervals of what was spoken. The *Rochester Union and Advertiser* apologized for its own coverage on the grounds that no reporter could have gotten further in such a scene of rowdyism and riot.

The Reverend J. H. Tuttle and Aaron M. Powell were both jeered down before Douglass finally gave the floor to Henry Hunter, the spokesman for the friends of the gallows. Hunter closed by offering a resolution in support of Stout's execution. When Douglass began to read the opposing resolutions another disturbance broke out, and he persisted, and finished the reading in defiance of every attempt to smother it. William C. Bloss and Frederick Starr rose to defend free speech before the meeting adjourned around ten.

The *Union and Advertiser*, which approved of neither the meeting nor the mob, sneered afterward that Frederick Douglass and company had been in their favorite element, that they liked nothing better than to be opposed in just such a spirit. Douglass objected to the charge and printed the substance of his remarks in his own paper on October 15.

THE TEXT

Two accounts survive, and neither is complete. The *Rochester Union and Advertiser* of October 8 gives what a reporter could take down inside a riot. *Frederick Douglass' Paper* of October 15 gives what Douglass himself said he had said, at greater length and in better order.

This edition braids them. Where Douglass's own printing expands a passage the reporter caught only in pieces, the fuller text is used. Interruptions from the floor are preserved, set in italics inside brackets, because they are not noise. They are the argument the room was making back.

Spelling and punctuation have been modernized and the reporter's abbreviations opened out. Sentences have been left where they fell. One name has been repaired: the *Dimond* of the newspaper report is Jonathan Dymond, the English Quaker moralist whose *Essays on the Principles of Morality* of 1829 supplied the anecdote of the forgers.

The resolutions are given entire. They are the only part of that evening that survives whole, and they carry the theological weight of the case... life as a gift held from God and not from government, the sacredness of life as the true index of a civilization, punishment as revenge dressed for court.

Jeff Hood
Editor

*Murder is not the cure for murder... lying and stealing will not cure
lying and stealing.*

Frederick Douglass, Rochester, 7 October 1858

PART ONE

THE MEETING

On the morning of December 20, 1857, Rochester woke to a body on a ledge above the Genesee River, thirty feet below the upper bank at the High Falls. The skull had been broken with a single blow from an iron mallet. The dead man was Charles W. Littles. The man who killed him was his brother-in-law, a twenty-two-year-old named Marion Ira Stout, who went by Ira, and who had struck him at the edge of the gorge expecting the river to carry the whole problem out to the lake before sunrise.

The river did not cooperate. Neither did anything else. There was enough evidence in hand to arrest Stout and his sister Sarah within the day.

What followed was the most sensational trial in that part of New York for a hundred years. Littles had been violent toward his wife, and Stout had a certain grim sympathy on that account. He also had a family history of forgery and prison, and a closeness with his sister that the East Coast papers worked over with great enthusiasm. The trial began in April 1858 and took a week. On the twenty-fourth the jury came back guilty, and the court sentenced Stout to hang. Sarah was convicted of manslaughter and sent to Sing Sing for seven years.

The appeal failed. A motion for a new trial failed. The execution was set for October 22.

Rochester at that moment held two of the most formidable reformers in the United States, and they both opposed the death penalty. Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass petitioned Governor John A. King for a commutation. When the petition looked like it would not be enough, more than thirty local reformers called a public meeting at City Hall for the evening of October 7 and brought in a nationally known anti-gallows

speaker to make the case.

It did not raise consciousness. It raised a mob.

Handbills went up that morning telling the supporters of capital punishment to come without fail, and they came. By eight o'clock roughly seventeen hundred people had filled the hall, a crowd the papers could only describe as promiscuous, meaning that it contained everybody and agreed on nothing. The chairman the organizers had selected did not appear. Douglass, who had come in only to listen, was asked to take the chair, and took it.

Anthony called the meeting to order and was hissed. Douglass rose and was met with racial taunts. He stood there and smiled at them. When he tried to explain that the meeting had been called by the opponents of the gallows, a voice in the crowd answered *Wimin*, and the hall laughed. When he asked who could be afraid of a man already chained in a cell, someone shouted back the instruction to white-wash him. When he said the jury and the community might be mistaken, the room told him to sit down, and told him to put in a white man.

He answered that. *A white man! There are some white men...* and then the noise took the rest of the sentence away, and he came back with the only thing he had left, which was the freedom of speech, which he said had to be protected, and he said it again, and he kept saying it for the rest of the night.

The Reverend J. H. Tuttle was shouted down. Aaron M. Powell was shouted down. Douglass finally gave the floor to Henry Hunter, who spoke for the friends of the gallows and finished by offering a resolution in favor of hanging Ira Stout on schedule. When Douglass began to read the eight resolutions of the meeting, the room came apart again. He read them anyway, all of them, to the end. Both sets were voted on and both were pronounced carried, in such confusion that the papers could not agree on what had happened first.

William C. Bloss and Frederick Starr rose to defend the right of the meeting to exist. Around ten o'clock it adjourned.

The next morning the *Union and Advertiser* printed its incomplete report along with the observation that Frederick Douglass and company had been in their favorite element, since they liked nothing better than to be opposed in just such a spirit. Douglass, who had spent the evening being screamed at by seventeen hundred people while defending their right to scream, did not care for the characterization. On October 15 he printed the substance of his remarks in his own newspaper.

What follows is that address.

PART TWO

THE ADDRESS

I. THE RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE

He said he was not there by any prearrangement, but had come in to hear what was said.

He had supposed the people of the city of Rochester were sufficiently advanced in wisdom, in refinement and in good manners to recognize the right of any class of persons to assemble peaceably and to express their opinions upon any question which concerned them and the public.

[Hisses and groans.]

To this no good citizen could object. And if any had come here tonight to disgrace themselves, if they had come with the demon superstition working in them, let them put it aside. The sooner they were rid of it the better.

This was a humble effort to save the young man, Ira Stout, confined in yonder jail, from dangling on the gallows. To save Rochester from being disgraced. To save a human being from being slain in cool blood.

[Hisses and cries for Hunter.]

If the meeting will come to order, all shall have ample opportunity to speak. This meeting was called by those opposed to the gallows. And by whom?

[A voice: "Wimin." Laughter.]

By the friends of virtue and order. The opponents of capital punishment.

[Order, order. Hunter, Hunter.]

II. MURDER IS NOT THE CURE FOR MURDER

If any man here has a spirit of bitterness, let him get rid of it.

Murder is not the cure for murder. Lying and stealing will not cure lying and stealing. The old doctrine was *an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*. But that was the doctrine of a bygone age and generation, and not of this one of light, intelligence and reason.

It was said that Ira Stout was guilty. Many believed it to be so.

[Hunter: Don't you know it to be so?]

The jury thought so. The community says so. And I am not here to impugn any man's motives. But I will simply say that the jury, and even the community, may be mistaken. We are not here to consider that question, or to debate that point.

[Sit down. Hisses. "Put in a white man." Great confusion for several minutes.]

A white man! There are some white men...

[Order, order.]

The freedom of speech! The freedom of speech must be protected!

III. HE IS ALREADY AN EXAMPLE

Who is afraid that Ira Stout can do mischief to life and property while he is confined in chains in yonder lonely cell? He is as secure as if he were dead.

[But he ought to be made an example of, to warn and restrain others.]

He is already an example. In that gloomy cell, deprived of liberty, separated from the activities of the world, with the trembling hope only of lifelong imprisonment before him, he is already an example and a warning. A terrible warning. A more striking and telling warning than if he were dangling on the gallows, or being slaughtered by the axe.

A man, so Dymond tells us, was executed in England for uttering forged notes, and his body was given to his comrades. What was the effect of the example upon them? Why, with the corpse in front of them, they were themselves seized in the act of uttering forged bank notes.

And the whole history of executions in England and in this country plainly teaches this lesson, that the gallows blunts all the better feelings of human nature and stimulates all the bad. The hanging day is the high day for gamblers, thieves, robbers and murderers, and they do not hesitate to improve the opportunity even while the convict is dangling on the gallows in the agonies of death.

IV. THE PARDONING POWER

[But he would still be within the reach of the pardoning power.]

I admit it. I admit that this power is liable to great abuse.

But in the name of all things sacred in heaven and earth, must we hang a man for no better reason than that if we let him live he may be pardoned and restored to society? Is there no other way of restraining the pardoning power? Are we reduced to the necessity of killing a man in order to place him beyond the reach of mercy?

What a confession this is of the impotence of the people. If the pardoning power is on the whole dangerous and mischievous, the power is with the people. Let them change it. But for mercy's sake, let not the fear that mercy may be shown become an apology for hanging.

I rose not to detain the meeting, but simply to bear my feeble testimony on behalf of mercy. It is an awful and tremendous responsibility to take the life of a human being willfully and deliberately. And if Ira Stout, now living and breathing and tremblingly hoping for the commutation of his punishment, dies on the twenty-second of October by the hand of the executioner, the responsibility falls heavily upon the whole community.

And for one, I say now, as I said at the beginning, I would clear my skirts of the blood of Ira Stout.

V. FREE SPEECH

We should consider this subject calmly and with reason. And above all we must insist upon free speech on this as on all other questions of public

concern. Free speech is the glory and the pride of American citizens.

[Cheers.]

He quoted Daniel Webster in his eloquent defense of free speech as a legacy to his children, amid much applause, and said this was language worthy of an American statesman.

In France, in Germany, in other despotic countries, there is no such thing as free speech. But here in the State of New York, under the star spangled banner, free speech is our boast. The Constitution says that free speech shall not be abridged, that all shall have the right peaceably to assemble and to express their opinions. What good citizen, in the face of that document, will stand up and call himself an American while he tramples this right and this privilege under foot?

[Cries for Hunter, and for Tuttle, and for "sit down."]

Mr. Douglass sat down amid hisses and cheers.

PART THREE

THE RESOLUTIONS

There was a dispute between Hunter and Douglass over whether the resolutions of the meeting should be read before the vote was taken on either set, and the papers were not entirely certain what was done first. All the resolutions were voted on and pronounced carried amid much confusion and uproar. The Douglass resolutions are as follows.

I

Resolved, That life is the great, primary, most precious and most comprehensive of all human rights. That whether it be coupled with virtue, honor and happiness, or with sin, disgrace and misery, the continued possession of it is not rightfully a matter of anyone's choosing. That it is neither deliberately nor voluntarily assumed, nor to be deliberately or voluntarily destroyed, either by individuals separately or combined in what is called Government. That it is a right derived solely and directly from God, the source of all goodness and the center of all authority, and is most manifestly designed by Him to be held, esteemed and revered among men as the most sacred, solemn and inviolable of all his gifts to man.

II

Resolved, That the love of man, as it shows itself in his actions toward his fellows, whether in public or in private relations, has ever been the surest test of the presence of God in the soul. That the degree to which the sacredness of human life has been exemplified in the eyes of the world has been the truest index of the measure of human progress. That in proportion as the tide of barbarism has receded, a higher regard has been

shown for the God-given right to life, and its inviolability has been strengthened in proportion to the development of the intellect and the moral sentiments. And that conscience, reason and revelation unite their testimony against the continuance of a custom barbarous in its origin, antichristian in its continuance, vindictive in its character and demoralizing in its tendencies.

III

Resolved, That any settled custom, precept, example or law, the observance of which necessarily tends to cheapen human life, or in any measure serves to diminish and weaken man's respect for it, is a custom, precept, example and law utterly inconsistent with the law of eternal goodness written on the constitution of man by his Maker, and is diametrically opposed to the safety, welfare and happiness of mankind. And that however ancient and honorable such laws and customs may be in the eyes of prejudice, superstition and bigotry, they ought to be discountenanced, abolished and supplanted by a higher civilization and a holier and more merciful Christianity.

IV

Resolved, That in the opinion of this meeting, when a criminal is firmly secured in the iron grasp of the government, and on that account can no longer endanger the peace and safety of society. When he is wasted and emaciated by heavy chains and horrid thoughts and long confinement in a gloomy cell. When, as is often the case, he is completely transformed in both temper and spirit. The execution of the death penalty upon such a one is an act of cold blooded and barbarous enormity, and is as cowardly as it is cruel. And that instead of repressing and preventing the horrid crime of murder, it really serves, by shocking and blunting the finer and better feelings of human nature, to undermine respect for human life, and leads directly to the perpetration of the very crime it would extinguish.

V

Resolved, That the time to advance opinions and principles is when those opinions and principles are on trial and threatened with outrage. And that while we have respectfully remained silent until the ends of justice have been served in fixing the guilt of the criminal, we now come, in the sacred office of humanity and benevolence, to appeal for mercy at the hands of his Excellency, Governor King, on behalf of young Ira Stout, and to ask that his punishment be commuted from capital execution to imprisonment for life.

VI

Resolved, That punishment as such is a form of revenge, wreaking upon the criminal the pain he has inflicted on another. That it is wrong in principle and pernicious in practice. That it arises out of the lowest propensities of human nature and is opposed to the highest civilization. And that it has no sanction in the spirit and the teachings of Christ, which everywhere abound in loving kindness and forgiveness.

VII

Resolved, That rather than visit the crime upon the head of the criminal, and so descend to his level, we ought to place him in a position to develop his higher nature. And that instead of descending to a spirit of revenge, degrading ourselves on the one hand and the criminal on the other, we should urge a thorough reform in our criminal laws, basing them on the truly Christian principle of love and good will toward man, and reject forever the cold blooded and barbarous principle of retaliation.

VIII

Resolved, That a copy of the foregoing resolutions, and of the proceedings of this meeting, be transmitted to his Excellency, Governor King, as an expression of the sense of this meeting, and that the same be subscribed by the Chairman and the Secretary thereof.

AFTERWORD

The resolutions went to Albany. Governor John A. King did nothing with them.

On the afternoon of October 22, 1858, Marion Ira Stout said goodbye to his family and was taken up to the garret of the Monroe County jail. About a hundred invited dignitaries were waiting. The apparatus was the one Rochester had always used, an upward jerking machine rather than a drop... a hundred and eighty-six pound weight resting on a swing door in the garret floor, a hempen cord running from the weight over two pulleys and down through two more doors nearly to the main floor of the jail. The gallows was old. Only the rope was new.

At two o'clock they put the rope around his neck and drew a cap over his face.

The weight fell. The neck did not break. It took him something like ten minutes to strangle in front of the invited guests, and the witnesses who wrote about it afterward were shocked and horrified, which is a thing worth sitting with, because every single one of them had come there on purpose.

They buried him in an unmarked grave in Section D of Mount Hope Cemetery.

I have read a great deal of this kind of paperwork. The machine is always different and it is always the same. In 1858 it was a weight on a swing door and a hemp cord that would not do what it was advertised to do. In Arkansas it is a three-drug protocol and a set of leather straps and a curtain that opens on a window. In Alabama it is a mask and a canister of nitrogen and a man on a gurney convulsing against the straps while the state insists that everything is proceeding exactly as expected.

The men who built the Rochester gallows believed it would be quick. The men who write the protocols believe it too. The belief is load bearing. Take it away and there is nothing underneath but a room full of people who came to watch.

Douglass told them that night that the responsibility would fall heavily on the whole community. Fifteen days later it did. It fell on the sheriff and on the governor and on the hundred with tickets and on the seventeen hundred who had come to City Hall to hiss at a woman and a Black man for asking the state to spare a killer's life.

It also fell short of the man himself. Ira Stout was not made better. He was not made an example. He was made dead, badly, and then he was made forgotten, and the murder he committed stayed exactly as committed as it had been on the twentieth of December the year before.

Nothing was cured. Nothing is ever cured.

Douglass said he would clear his skirts of the blood of Ira Stout. He did. That is the whole of what abolition offers most days... you will probably not save the man, and you will not be able to say you agreed to it.

It is not enough. It has never been enough. Keep saying it anyway.

Jeff Hood

DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

The Gallows. The apparatus of judicial hanging, and by extension the death penalty itself. Nineteenth century abolitionists used the word the way we now use *the chamber* or *the gurney*... a piece of furniture standing in for a whole system.

Sudden Suspension. A hanging method in which the condemned is jerked upward by a falling counterweight rather than dropped through a trap. It was believed to be faster and more certain than the drop. It was not. Rochester used a hundred and eighty-six pound weight on a swing door in the jail garret, and it failed on Ira Stout.

Commutation. The reduction of a sentence by executive act, most often from death to life imprisonment. It does not overturn the conviction. It was what the Rochester meeting asked of Governor King, and it is what nearly every clemency petition in a modern capital case still asks for.

Reprieve. A temporary postponement of an execution, granted to allow further review. A reprieve buys weeks. A commutation ends the matter. Families of the condemned learn the difference quickly and never forget it.

The Pardoning Power. The constitutional authority of a governor or president to pardon, commute or reprieve. Hunter's side argued that night that a living prisoner might one day be pardoned and released, which was reason enough to kill him. Douglass answered that killing a man to place him beyond the reach of mercy is a confession that the people cannot govern themselves.

Lex Talionis. The law of retaliation. *An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.* Douglass grants that this was once the doctrine and insists that it belongs to a bygone age. Every argument for the death penalty that appeals to

proportion is a version of it.

Exemplarity. The nineteenth century word for deterrence. The claim that an execution instructs the public by terrifying it. Douglass answers it twice... first by saying that a man rotting in a cell is already the more terrible warning, and then by pointing out that the instruction demonstrably fails.

Uttering Forged Notes. Passing counterfeit currency, a capital offense in England into the 1830s. Jonathan Dymond's *Essays on the Principles of Morality* (1829) records the case of forgers who were caught passing false notes in the presence of the corpse of a comrade hanged for the identical crime. It is the anecdote Douglass reaches for, and it is still the cleanest one page refutation of deterrence in English.

The Brutalization Effect. The modern name for what Douglass describes when he says the gallows blunts the better feelings and stimulates the bad. Contemporary research on execution publicity finds short term increases rather than decreases in homicide. He was a hundred and thirty years early.

Botched Execution. An execution that departs materially from its own protocol. Strangulation instead of a broken neck. Failed venous access. Prolonged consciousness. The category is old and it is not shrinking. Its persistence is not a defect in the machinery. It is the machinery.

Handbill. A single printed sheet distributed by hand, the fastest mass communication available in 1858. On the morning of October 7 the friends of the gallows used handbills to fill City Hall with a mob. The tool has changed. The tactic has not.

FURTHER READING

The address survives only in newspaper form and has never been widely reprinted. Readers who want the scholarly text should begin with the Blassingame edition below, which collates both accounts and supplies the contemporary press citations on which this volume relies.

ON DOUGLASS AND THE ROCHESTER MEETING

Blassingame, John W., ed. *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Volume 3: 1855–63*. Yale University Press, 1985. The standard scholarly text of the address, with the *Union and Advertiser* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper* versions and full press citations.

Blight, David W. *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. Simon and Schuster, 2018. The definitive modern biography, and the best account of the Rochester years.

Harper, Ida Husted. *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*. 2 vols. Indianapolis, 1899. Anthony's own account of the meeting she organized and was hissed at for organizing.

Dymond, Jonathan. *Essays on the Principles of Morality*. London, 1829. The source of the forgers anecdote, and one of the founding Quaker arguments against the punishment of death.

ON THE MACHINERY

Sarat, Austin. *Gruesome Spectacles: Botched Executions and America's Death Penalty*. Stanford University Press, 2014. A century and a half of failed executions, counted and catalogued. Ira Stout's would not have been unusual.

Banner, Stuart. *The Death Penalty: An American History*. Harvard University Press, 2002. How the American gallows moved indoors, and why.

ON THE PRESENT

Prejean, Helen. *Dead Man Walking*. Random House, 1993. The book that put a witness in the room and made the country look.

Stevenson, Bryan. *Just Mercy*. Spiegel and Grau, 2014. Innocence, mercy and the distance between them.

Death Penalty Information Center. deathpenaltyinfo.org. Current execution data, clemency records and state by state protocols.

RELATED VOLUMES IN THIS SERIES

Livingston, Edward. *Argument Against Capital Punishment*. V. 6. 1833. Edited and modernized by Jeff Hood. Complicit Press, 2026. On the psychology of deterrence and the disgrace of public execution.

Spear, Charles. *Essays on the Punishment of Death*. V. 10. 1844. Edited and modernized by Jeff Hood and Kat Bodrie. Complicit Press, 2026. The American case, assembled by the man who spent his life assembling it.

O'Sullivan, John L. *Report in Favor of the Abolition of the Punishment of Death by Law*. V. 12. 1841. Edited and modernized by Jeff Hood. Complicit Press, 2026. The New York report, addressed to the same legislature Douglass was petitioning seventeen years later.

Burleigh, Charles C. *Thoughts on the Death Penalty*. V. 22. 1845. Edited and modernized by Jeff Hood. Complicit Press, 2026. The pamphlet circulating in the reform halls Douglass spoke in.

Dickens, Charles. *Capital Punishment*. V. 23. 1846. Edited and modernized by Jeff Hood. Complicit Press, 2026. The English letters, written twelve years earlier, on the crowd that gathers to watch.

Bentham, Jeremy, Maximilien Robespierre and James Haughton. *An Excerpt, a Speech & a Pamphlet*. V. 24. 1791–1850. Edited and modernized by Jeff Hood. Complicit Press, 2026. Three arguments from three countries,

gathered into one volume.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

The Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood is an author, activist and death row advocate. He is the founder of the Execution Intervention Project, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the abolition of the death penalty, and serves as Dean of The New Theology School, where he holds the Rev. Charles Moore Professor of Prophetic Theology chair.

He has served as spiritual advisor to condemned people across multiple states and has personally witnessed thirteen executions. His work is grounded in direct personal witness... in the visitation rooms, in the holding cells, in the chamber itself.

He edits The Death Penalty Abolition Classics for Complicit Press.

executionintervention.org