



Brandeis University

The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism *Exposing injustice through watchdog reporting*

September 18
Thursday, 6:30 p.m.

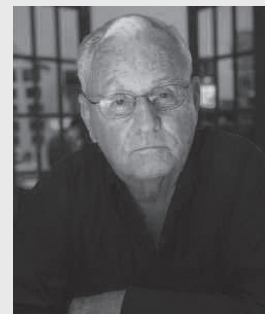
Carl J. Shapiro Theater
Shapiro Campus Center
Brandeis University

Program of Events

6:30 Introduction by Florence George Graves, Founding Director,
The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism

Introduction of guest speakers the Rev. Carroll Pickett and Maurice Possley

The **Reverend Carroll Pickett** ministered to more than ninety individuals on the days they were executed during his fifteen year career as death house chaplain at the Walls prison unit in Huntsville, Texas. Today Pickett is an outspoken anti-death penalty activist. He is retired from the Department of Corrections but still preaches near Huntsville, Texas.



Maurice Possley is a Pulitzer Prize-winning criminal justice reporter. A journalist since 1972, he worked for the *The Chicago Tribune* from 1984 to 2008, including as an investigative reporter covering state and federal criminal courts and as deputy metropolitan editor. His work and that of others at the *Tribune* was cited by Illinois's governor in 2003 when he commuted all Illinois death sentences to life in prison.



6:45 Film screening of *At the Death House Door* by award-winning filmmakers of *Hoop Dreams*, Steve James and Peter Gilbert

Q&A with the Rev. Carroll Pickett and Maurice Possley

Reception Featuring photos from Scott Langley's Death Penalty
Documentary Photography Project

The Project is an eight-year product of exploring capital punishment through the photographer's lens. Since 1999, Scott Langley has chosen to simply capture what he sees in his own journey of working against capital punishment as a representative of Amnesty International.

Langley's full gallery: www.langleycreations.com/photo





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About the Justice Brandeis Innocence Project:

The Justice Brandeis Innocence Project addresses an ethical crisis in the United States: the incarceration of thousands of innocent people. Most are poor and nonwhite; class and race make them more vulnerable to arrest and conviction and least able to afford effective legal representation.

The Schuster Institute's Justice Brandeis Innocence Project uses high-quality investigative reporting techniques to probe New England cases in which inmates may have been wrongfully convicted, in large part because of race and class—and which have no DNA evidence to test. Most innocence projects pursue cases with DNA. And yet experts say that more than 80 percent of wrongful convictions have no DNA evidence to test.

Cases are referred to us by the New England Innocence Project (NEIP), which investigates cases with testable DNA. NEIP attorneys or law school students have reviewed these cases and concluded that the inmates might well be innocent. An NEIP lawyer (a Brandeis graduate!) told us they have “a closet full” of such cases—and that ***if we don't investigate them, no one will***, leaving potentially innocent people in jail for life for murders they did not commit, while the actual murderers go unpunished.

We use time- and resource-intensive techniques to dig into the facts of such cases, including examining court documents and police records; reconstructing the crime scene and timeline; interviewing or re-interviewing witnesses; and then reporting on our findings for publication or broadcast.

We hire Brandeis students to assist us; any student interested in social justice, journalism, or law can apply on our website.

Some shocking research conclusions:

- Experts have estimated Massachusetts' probable wrongful convictions as ranging from 0.5 to 4 percent of its convictions each year. Taking the lowest estimate, that would have meant 94 innocent people imprisoned in Massachusetts in 2000; for the most serious felonies, that would mean 10 innocent people sent to state prisons. Of these, only 23 were exonerated between 1982 and 2004. (“Convictions of Innocent Persons in Massachusetts: An Overview,” *Boston University Public Interest Law Journal*, Boston University School of Law Prof. Stanley Z. Fisher, 2002.)

- Over the past fifteen years, ***more than 28,500 non-death row inmates would have been exonerated*** “if we reviewed prison sentences with the same level of care we devote to death sentences.” (“Exonerations In The United States 1989 Through 2003,” University of Michigan Prof. Samuel Gross, 2004.)

The Institute was founded with a generous gift from the **Elaine and Gerald Schuster Charitable Foundation**, and is sustained by other grants and donations.

The Institute thanks its co-sponsors:

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For more information about the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism's Justice Brandeis Innocence Project, please visit www.brandeis.edu/investigate.