

EXTRA 42/02

Death pen**USA (Texas) Jeffery Lynn Williams (m), black, aged 30**

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Jeffery Williams is scheduled to be executed in Texas on 26 June 2002. He was sentenced to death for the murder of Barbara Pullins in 1994.

Barbara Pullins was strangled to death at her home in Houston on the night of 26-27 October 1994. Jeffery Williams was arrested on 28 October at his girlfriend's apartment, where several items stolen from Barbara Pullins's home were found. He was identified by Barbara Pullins's nine-year-old daughter who was allegedly also sexually assaulted on the night of the crime.

Jeffery Williams gave three videotaped statements to police admitting his involvement in the killing. In his first statement, he said that Barbara Pullins had let him into her apartment, that they had had consensual sex involving erotic strangulation, and that she had died when this went too far. In his second statement given after a night in the jail, Williams sought to implicate his own cousin in the killing. After continued interrogation, he made a third statement in which he said that the motive was robbery, and that he had killed Barbara Pullins after the two had had sex. This third statement was the only one introduced into evidence at the trial. Although the defence lawyers unsuccessfully sought to have the judge instruct the jury that it could find Williams guilty of an offence of less than capital murder, they did not offer any of the evidence that would have supported such a finding, such as Williams's original statement to police which indicated that the killing of Barbara Pullins was accidental or reckless rather than intentional. Efforts on appeal to argue that the defence lawyers were constitutionally ineffective for failing to raise such evidence have been unsuccessful.

The jury found Jeffery Williams guilty of capital murder. The state provided evidence of the defendant's long history of car theft and joyriding in order to support a finding of his "future dangerousness" - a prerequisite to a death sentence in Texas. The defence lawyers presented a psychologist who said that the serious neglect and sexual and physical abuse that Williams had suffered as a child had produced a severe psychological disturbance in him. During his last period of confinement in prison prior to the killing of Barbara Pullins, he had reportedly had a psychotic episode in which he experienced auditory and visual hallucinations and had attempted suicide. On the night of the crime, Williams had apparently been taking anti-psychotic medication and alcohol. The jury voted for execution.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, regardless of questions of guilt or innocence, the seriousness of the crime, the existence or absence of mitigating evidence, or the method used by the state to kill the prisoner. The organization believes that every death sentence is an affront to human dignity, and every execution a symptom of a culture of violence rather than a solution to it. The victims of violent crime and their families are deserving of respect, compassion and justice; retributive killing is surely not the way to achieve these goals.

A clear majority of countries - currently 111 - have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. The international community has ruled out the death penalty as a sentencing option in international courts for even the worst crimes -

genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The USA's continuing resort to this punishment, often in ways and cases which violate international minimum safeguards, starkly gives the lie to its claims to be a progressive force for human rights in the world. Since resuming executions in 1977, 780 men and women have been put to death across the United States, more than 600 of them since 1990. Texas accounts for 271 of these executions. Sixty-three of these prisoners were prosecuted in a single county, Harris County, where Jeffery Williams was also tried. Fifteen of the 31 prisoners executed in the USA this year have been killed in Texas.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language, in your own words:**

- expressing sympathy for the family of Barbara Pullins, and explaining that you are not seeking to excuse the manner of her death;
- execution of Jeffery Williams, and expressing deep concern at the number of executions in Texas (you may use any anti death penalty arguments you wish);
- expressing concern that his trial lawyers did not introduce available evidence supportive of a finding of less than capital murder;
- noting evidence that Jeffery Williams was suffering from a mental disorder at the time of the death of Barbara Pullins;
- calling for clemency for Jeffery Williams.

**APPEALS TO:**

Gerald Garrett, Chairperson, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles  
P.O. Box 13401, Austin, Texas 78711-3401, USA

**Fax: +1 512 463 8120**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Chairperson**

**COPIES TO:**

The Honourable Rick Perry, Governor of Texas  
State Capitol, PO Box 12428, Austin, TX 78711, USA

**Fax: +1 512 463 1849; or + 1 512 463 0039; or +1 512 463 1932**

and to diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**