



Experts Available: Death Penalty Sentencing

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Harrison Young

On December 11th, the Supreme Court will hear the case of [McKinney v. Arizona](#), examining the role of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a mitigating factor in death penalty sentencing. If you're looking for experts for your upcoming coverage of the case, these scholars are available to comment:

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JENNIFER C. SARRETT

CARE International



"This case could help many with a history of trauma give valid, mental health related context to their crimes. Context is crucial when deciding someones culpability, particularly when the death penalty is on the table."

ELIZABETH RAPAPORT

University of New Mexico



"Trump has announced the resumption of federal executions with five federal prisoners slated to be executed Dec 9th. There have been no federal executions in at least 15 years. They were rare up to that point. Five at once is a massive departure. This is also a significant death penalty development."

FRANK R. BAUMGARTNER

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



"To the degree that the death penalty is targeted at all, it is targeted at most vulnerable defendants: the poorest, those with the worst attorneys, those least able to defend themselves for whatever reason. Mental illness, including PTSD, is an important part of this

unfair targeting."

COLLEEN MARGARET BERRYESSA

Rutgers University-Newark



"We know that there is a well-established link between childhood abuse and significant risk for adult criminal behavior. There is a strong normative argument that this trauma in childhood should be considered mitigating to an offender's criminal responsibility because it significantly 'limits' an offender's future choices and decision-making. It is imperative that knowledge of childhood trauma and PTSD be considered in punishment in order for it to be considered just or proportionate to an offender's 'lesser' culpability for his crimes."