

Session 16

Today, we heard from **Laurel Hattix**, a Federal Public Defender in Alabama's Capital Habeas Unit, where she represents people on death row in post-conviction appeals. She shared her experience in public interest law and helped us understand the people and systems behind the death penalty. Laurel discussed how many people on death row are people of color and challenged the idea that they are simply "the worst of the worst." She explained how many of her clients have experienced poverty, abuse, trauma, and untreated mental health issues, while also emphasizing the importance of strong legal representation when someone's life is at stake. She shared the story of her client, **Mr. Lee**, whose jury originally voted for life without parole, but a judge overrode that decision and sentenced him to death. Laurel discussed how this system raised concerns about political influence and how Alabama's decision to end judicial override was not made retroactive. Laurel ended by reminding us that justice starts before the courtroom. She encouraged us to think about how education, healthcare, mental health resources, and other support systems can prevent people from entering the criminal legal system in the first place. She reminded us that whatever career we choose, we can use our work to challenge unfair systems and create change in our communities.

Continue Learning & Spread the Word:

Learn more about Mr. Lee's story: <https://lifeforjefferylee.com/>

To-Do's before next session

- [Slack Sign-up — Common Power](#)

Action Opportunities

- Check out the Calendar [Action Calendar](#)
- Don't forget to log your action [log action form](#)
- The Action Academy [Zine form](#)

Missed this session?

- Watch the session recording first
 - Email your state crew lead to schedule a meeting to make up your session!

Recording of this session

- [Click Here for ZOOM Link](#)
PASSWORD: g1bDd%hs

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