

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“RACIST ROOTS” FILM TO PREMIERE IN ASHEVILLE ON AUGUST 17**

July 20, 2022, Asheville, NC – A new film, RACIST ROOTS, will premiere in the Asheville area as part of “*Just Sentencing: How North Carolina’s Death Penalty Grew from Racist Roots,*” a presentation on Wednesday, August 17 from 1:30 to 3 PM. The presentation at the Reuter Center on the campus of UNC Asheville is free and open to the public.

In August, North Carolina will mark sixteen years since its last execution, yet the death penalty remains on the books in the state. To honor this anniversary, the NC Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is presenting the new film RACIST ROOTS, a premiere in the Asheville area. This powerful 25-minute film, created by the Center for Death Penalty Litigation, exposes the death penalty’s deep entanglement with slavery, lynching and racism. The film features several stories of Black men, including an Asheville man, who were unjustly convicted and sentenced to death. The film and a panel discussion to follow will highlight the diverse voices that are central to the movement to end North Carolina’s death penalty.

The panel will consist of:

Henderson Hill

Henderson Hill is a trial attorney, community activist, policy consultant and non-profit leader. Mr. Hill is Senior Counsel to the ACLU and co-director of Redress NC, an initiative to unwind extreme sentences through collaboration with community stakeholders. He was the founder and first director of the Center for Death Penalty Litigation. He was formerly a partner at the civil rights law firm, Ferguson Stein Chambers in Charlotte, NC and served as director of the Federal Defenders of Western North Carolina. Most recently, Mr. Hill served as founding director of the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment Project. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Mr. Hill is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers.

Jean Parks

Jean Parks is a psychologist who was born in Asheville. Her older sister, Elizabeth “Betsy” Parks Rosenberg, was brutally murdered in 1975 near the NC State University campus in Raleigh. For almost two decades, Ms. Parks has participated in efforts to release North Carolina from the burden of having a death penalty system. She spreads the word that she and many other murder victim family members believe the execution of a human being cannot bring justice or healing.

Noel Nickle

Noel Nickle lives in Asheville and is the executive director of the North Carolina Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Ms. Nickle worked as a mitigation specialist on trial and post-conviction death penalty cases in North and South Carolina for fifteen years. She is committed to restorative and transformative justice and has a master’s in social work.

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North Carolina's death penalty grew from a seed planted in the soil of slavery. It matured in the years of Jim Crow. Today, the death penalty remains in North Carolina, nourished by racist backlash to the civil rights movement. People of color make up less than 30 percent of North Carolina's population but 60 percent of its death row. Nearly half of people currently on death row had an all-white jury or a jury with only a single person of color.

*Just Sentencing* is one of a series of "Just Conversations" sponsored by the OLLI at UNC Asheville Inclusion Committee. It will be held on Wednesday, August 17, from 1:30 to 3 PM in the Manheimer Room (102) at the Reuter Center, 300 Campus View Road, Asheville, NC 28804.

The Reuter Center is located on the campus of UNC Asheville. Free parking with a parking permit day pass is available at the Reuter Center and at Visitor lots on campus. To register for this free event and receive a free parking permit day pass go to: <https://tinyurl.com/olliroots>

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