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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

On March 24, 2021, Virginia became the 23rd state to abolish the death penalty, the first state in the South to do so. Acknowledging the unfairness, uncertainties, and racial inequities underlying the death penalty system, Virginia's legislature and governor collectively agreed that the death penalty could no longer play a role in the Commonwealth's criminal justice system. Along with achieving abolition, the Virginia legislature's extensive debates and ultimate rejection of the death penalty cracked open the door to greater discussions over the validity and effectiveness of the death penalty in other southern parts of the United States. Signing the bill into law, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam said, "The death penalty system is fundamentally flawed—it is inequitable, ineffective, and it has no place in this Commonwealth or this country."

To commemorate the accomplishment of abolition and to look back at Virginia's long and complicated history with the death penalty, the *Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice's* 2021–2022 Symposium titled *Revoking Irrevocable Punishment* centered around Virginia's long, complex, and sorrowful path toward abolition. From February 10 to February 11 of 2022, the Journal organized and moderated seven panels that addressed various components of death penalty discourse in Virginia and elsewhere, past and present.

Volume 29's Symposium Edition of the *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice* includes three articles and an essay from panelists and speakers at the 2021–2022 Symposium. The articles examine the Supreme Court's increasing reluctance towards regulation and judicial abolition of the death penalty, the continued relevance and persuasiveness of Justice Thurgood Marshall's arguments against the death penalty, and the necessity for safeguards to prevent executions of persons with severe mental illness. Lastly, Professor David Bruck's transcribed talk from 2002 finishes out this volume with recollections of his experiences as a death row lawyer, in which he emphasizes why death penalty work matters. While Virginia's abolition of the death penalty is a step in the right direction for the abolitionist movement, as these articles and essay convey, still more work needs to be done to achieve abolition in other states and parts of the country through legislative and judicial action.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the people who helped make this publication possible. I would like to thank Mallory Kostroff, Executive Editor, and Anne Rodgers and Francis Morency, Managing Editors. A special thanks also goes out to Claire Welch, the Symposium Editor of Volume 28, who planned, organized, and oversaw the 2021–2022 Symposium, *Revoking Irrevocable Punishment*.

Peyton Holahan
Editor in Chief