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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**INFORMATION**

Committee for Alternatives to the Death Penalty  
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## An Innocent Survivor from Death Row Tells His Fascinating Story in Olympia Friday September 30, 7 pm

Juan Meléndez was released from Florida's death row after spending nearly 18 years for a crime he did not commit. He will speak at 7:00 p.m. on Friday September 30 at The United Churches sanctuary at 110 11<sup>th</sup> Ave SE, Olympia (between S. Capitol Way and Washington St. SE), slightly NE of the State Capitol campus.

Juan was the 99<sup>th</sup> death row inmate in the U.S. to be exonerated and released since 1973. The number currently stands at 138, according to the Death Penalty Information Center ([www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)).

Juan's story includes some common aspects of the death penalty's inherent injustices, including being imposed on people who are poor, brown-skinned, and innocent. But his story is profoundly personal. He survived with his human spirit intact despite the oppressive forces of dehumanization, degradation and death.

- How did Juan endure torturous conditions of confinement for almost two decades?
- How did he maintain his humanity and his sanity under such conditions?
- How did he learn to let go of his all-consuming anger and hatred?
- How did a man change for the better after spending seventeen years, eight months and one day on death row for a crime he did not commit?

Hear Juan Meléndez tell his remarkable story of human resilience, courage, faith and hope. It is a multi-dimensional story that inspires at multi-dimensional levels. It is a story that everyone needs to hear, regardless of what you think or feel about the death penalty.

On January 3, 2002, the State of Florida sent Juan Meléndez into the free world with a pair of pants, a shirt and \$100. That was it! Nothing to compensate him for his wrongful death row incarceration for almost two decades; nothing for mental health care; and nothing to assist him in job training or learning basic living skills in a dramatically changed post-millennium world.

And no apology from the government that had wronged him so severely and so persistently.

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Juan Meléndez consistently inspires and delights audiences with his uniquely dynamic and captivating multi-dimensional presentation. His passion and brilliance inspire and energize people to work toward abolishing the death penalty. He has unequivocally opened and changed the hearts and minds of many who hear his powerful message.

Indeed, his message is so powerful that it profoundly impacts people all across the political spectrum. This was perhaps most dramatically demonstrated when he received a standing ovation from a capacity audience at Brigham Young School of Law in September 2004.

Simon Keyes, Director of St. Ethelburga's Center for Peace and Reconciliation, London, England, said this about Juan's presentation there: "One of the most powerful and moving events we have had here, not just the extraordinary story he had to tell but the grace and skill with which he told it."

More information about Juan Meléndez is at [www.voicesunited4justice.com](http://www.voicesunited4justice.com)

The event is free, but donations will be encouraged.

**This event is sponsored by the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation's Committee for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.** Contact Emily Hammargren, (360) 352-0695 [deathpenalty@olympiafor.org](mailto:deathpenalty@olympiafor.org).

More information about the death penalty is at [www.olympiafor.org/death\\_penalty.htm](http://www.olympiafor.org/death_penalty.htm).

