

Aggravated murders

Published in: Letters

News and Observer December 6, 2011

The N&O, advocating for the state's Racial Justice Act, states that "killers of white victims are more likely to receive a death sentence than the killers of black victims." This claim, first made here 28 years ago on behalf of a white murderer, John Rook, was rejected by the court; I testified in that case.

It is a fact that murders involving white victims tend to be more aggravated than murders involving black victims and more deserving of the death penalty. I do not believe there is valid statistical evidence of racial discrimination in the death penalty. Death penalty opponents should focus their attention on other issues such as morality of the death penalty.

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Note: the N&O left out the most significant part of my letter (below); the Carrboro Citizen included it.

UNC Political Scientist Issac Unah and Law School dean Jack Boger claimed similar results in 2001. Their study was deeply flawed and none of three versions has been accepted for publication. Indeed, one version said "local prosecutors in the South who oncemade race-conscious decisions ... now appear race neutral."

Current trials refer to a new study by Catherine Grosso but no report has been issued or subjected to peer review. Like Unah, Grosso is trying to have the data sealed by the Court; what do they have to hide?