

Declaration of Pastor Reginald Gundy
Pursuant to Fl. Stat. Ann § 92.525 and 28 U.S.C. § 1746

1. My name is Reginald Gundy. I am a lifelong resident of Duval County, and have served as the Pastor of Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church, in Jacksonville, since 1999. Mt. Sinai Baptist Church was founded in 1908, since then serving God's children and spreading the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
2. While our church serves people of all races and backgrounds, the majority of our members are Americans of African descent (the accurate terminology I prefer over other terms such as Black or African American).
3. Our Church maintains close involvement in our community, spiritually, civically, and in terms of providing service. For example, we recently hosted a walk-in resource fair and legal clinic to provide legal and social services to anyone in need. In the spirit of Matthew 25:40, we are regularly involved in serving those who need help and thereby honoring and serving Jesus. This keeps me in frequent everyday contact with my community.
4. Civically, we engage, and ensure that our community members have education and information, and access to the voting franchise. Since 2018, I estimate that I have registered 80,000 people to vote in Duval County alone, and I work to make sure people get the vote out. I have served as a plaintiff in voting rights lawsuits, and have advocated against unfair redistricting that dilutes if not silences the voices of the members of my community.
5. Our work extends to organizing for safety in our communities. This includes organizing against urban violence, and organizing and speaking out against police violence and shootings of individuals. All of this work, too, keeps me in daily contact in my community, to the point that I am frequently overscheduled with community engagement. I could fill pages describing all of the different efforts to which I contribute.
6. I have been asked to share my views concerning the exclusion of jurors from capital trials who oppose the death penalty. In short, I think that this exclusion puts a badge of inferiority on those excluded, and I understand that these exclusions disproportionately exclude people like myself and those in my faith community, Americans of African descent and religious persons.
7. From the perspective of religion, the most significant event in the Bible was the Christ event, that is, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, described in the New Testament. Jesus was convicted, falsely convicted for a capital offense. In my view of the Bible and Christianity, we see an unjust execution of Jesus by a faulty state ruling. If an innocent person,

Jesus Christ the most clear example, can be convicted and sentenced to death, there is a problem with our understanding of capital punishment.

8. The teachings of the Gospel telling us to have mercy carry similar weight. Matthew 25:40 teaches, in lay terms, that whatever we do to the least of the brothers or sisters of Jesus Christ, that we do unto Jesus Christ. We are called upon to have mercy on the outsider, the traveler, the person of a different background, and yes, even a person convicted of crime. This informs my Christian faith and that of my faith community.
9. But as a member of the community of Americans of African descent, I have additional reasons to oppose the death penalty. They go back to a history that started in 1619. That year, enslavers first brought Africans to this country in chains. This history of violence and dehumanization continued through failed Reconstruction, and then through racial-terror lynchings and violence, which were later replaced in large part by state executions (legal lynchings), disproportionately punishing Black people and people charged with killing, or in many cases, raping, white victims. This history continues today, as night from day, through unjust and inequitable policing and police violence against members of my community, and the continuing use of the death penalty in discriminatory ways.
10. In short, both my religion and my experience as an American of African descent inform my opposition to the death penalty.
11. Yet, as I noted above, I deeply want to participate in civic life, including of course voting but not limited to voting. I am qualified to sit on a jury in a capital murder case and listen to the evidence, weigh the evidence, judge the facts, bring my own viewpoint to bear, deliberate, and reach a verdict. I can even listen to the evidence in a sentencing trial where the State seeks the death penalty. I can listen to aggravating and mitigating evidence and weigh that evidence. If the person were guilty of first-degree murder, I could vote for a lawful verdict in the State of Florida, of life imprisonment. The only thing I can't do is go along with a State's preference for an execution, the other lawful punishment for this crime in Florida.
12. With my fellow religious leader Reverend Dr. Russell Meyer, I recently published an op-ed attempting to describe the injustice of excluding me and members of my community from capital trials based on views legitimately flowing from our experiences as Americans of African Descent. That op-ed is attached to this declaration as Exhibit A.
13. The bottom line is that I want to participate civically, but I can't because of my honestly and deeply held religious views. And I can't serve because of my legitimate life experience, and the history I share with my ancestors, of being an American of African descent. This exclusion is insulting, and deeply hurts. It is a

badge of inferiority unjustly placed upon me by the courts. My viewpoints and voice matter. So do those of my community. I want to serve.

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have read the foregoing declaration and that the facts stated in it are true.



Reginald Gundy

February 23, 2023

Date