



Western Association of Criminal Justice

Thursday, October 9

8:00am-12:00pm REGISTRATION/HOSPITALITY DESK Emerald Bay 123

8:30am MORNING REFRESHMENTS Emerald Bay 123

Sponsored by: Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences

9:00am - 9:50am EVENT # 6 Emerald Bay 123

PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Incorporating Race and Gender Bias into Criminal Justice Research

Chair: Alexis Harper, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice-Office of Research and Statistics

Gauging Race as a Factor in Law Enforcement Engagement in Colorado

Alexis Harper, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice-Office of Research and Statistics

Jack Reed, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice-Office of Research and Statistics

Michael Phillips, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice-Office of Research and Statistics

Per SB20-217, the State of Colorado collects law enforcement data on contacts with citizens and use of force as a result of those contacts. This analysis reviews the degree to which contacts, how and when they occur, and the outcomes of those contacts are associated with race. Even after controlling for why citizens are contacted, including participating in unlawful activity, findings indicate Black, Hispanic, and Native American individuals are more likely to be arrested and to have force used against them than White individuals. Evidence-based opportunities to reduce the disproportionate representation of minorities in law enforcement engagements are discussed.

Judicial Performance Evaluations and the Problem of Gender Bias

David Brody, Washington State University

Judicial performance evaluations (JPEs) have been used to inform voters about the performance of judges standing for retention elections for nearly half a century. These evaluations are centered around responses to standardized questionnaires by individuals who have appeared before a judge regarding behavior-based items related to process and demeanor. Despite concerns about JPE being gender biased, and theoretical support for these concerns, minimal research has been conducted. This study examines JPE results across five jurisdictions over multiple election cycles. Results of individual state and pooled mean analysis are presented, and implications for the criminal justice system are discussed.



Western Association of Criminal Justice

10:00am - 10:50am

EVENT # 7

Emerald Bay 123

BOOK PREVIEW: Cutting Life Short

Dan Fetsco, University of Wyoming

Today, one in seven inmates in U.S. prisons are serving a life sentence. However, this was not always the case. *Cutting Life Short* provides an in-depth examination of how the lifer population in Wyoming and America has grown since the mid-1980s. Dan Fetsco, an attorney who has years of experience in the Wyoming criminal justice system, utilizes extensive research and case studies of Wyoming lifers to illustrate the problems with life sentences. The book challenges the narrative that people who have committed murder or other serious crimes should never be released, highlighting data from the public and survivors of violent crimes that indicate support for second chances.

11:00am-11:15am

EVENT # 8

Emerald Bay 123

ACJS President Remarks

Stephanie Mizrahi, Sacramento State University

11:15am

EVENT # 9

Emerald Bay 123

BUSINESS MEETING

Future Directions by WACJ Executive Board

Financial Report by Andrew Giacomazzi, Treasurer

Organization Updates by Marianne Hudson, Secretary

Nominations for Second Vice President

*****ALL INVITED---NOMINATIONS FOR SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT WILL BE
TAKEN*****



Western Association of Criminal Justice

EVENT # 10

WACJ LUNCHEON

12:00pm - 1:30pm, Emerald Bay A

“The Use of Drones in Modern Law Enforcement”

**Guest Speakers: Chief Deputy Jason Walker & Sergeant George
Gomez, Washoe County Sheriff's Office**

This presentation explores the growing role of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in policing and public safety. It examines how drones are used for surveillance, search and rescue, crowd monitoring, accident reconstruction, and tactical operations. The session also addresses legal and ethical considerations, including privacy concerns, Fourth Amendment implications, and community trust. By highlighting both benefits and challenges, the presentation provides a balanced look at how drone technology is shaping the future of law enforcement practices.

Jason Walker is the Chief Deputy of the Operations Division. He has been with the agency for 20 years. He has experience in all three divisions including Special Operations.

Sergeant George Gomez has been with Washoe County Sheriff's Office for over 13 years. He has worked numerous assignments in Detention, Patrol, Detectives and also as a supervisor in those areas as well. Currently, he is the Assistant Director of the Northern Nevada Real Time Intelligence Center (NNRIC). He oversees the Drone Program and is the project manager to the soon to be Real Time Intelligence Center (RTIC) & Drone as First Responder Program (DFR), which they are hoping to launch within eight weeks.

Featured Sponsor: The University of Nevada, Reno



Western Association of Criminal Justice

1:30pm-3:30pm **REGISTRATION/HOSPITALITY DESK** **Emerald Bay 123**

1:30pm **AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS** **Emerald Bay 123**
Sponsored by: University of Wyoming

1:30pm-2:20pm **EVENT # 11** **Emerald Bay 123**
PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice
Chair: Cary Heck, Colorado Adult Probation Department

Building Sustainable Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships: Lessons from a 6-year Collaboration Between the Colorado Adult Probation Department and the University of Wyoming
Cary Heck, Colorado Adult Probation Department
Eric Wodahl, University of Wyoming

In 2019, the Denver Adult Probation Department and the University of Wyoming Department of Criminal Justice & Sociology embarked on a partnership to study drivers of revocations among adult probationers. What began as a short-term project has since evolved into a six-year, in-depth data collection initiative, resulting in a comprehensive dataset capturing individual-level measures of both client and officer behaviors and outcomes. While successful, this partnership has not come without challenges. This presentation seeks to provide guidance for building successful research-practitioner partnerships, by exploring the lessons learned from this ongoing collaboration. Topics discussed include the importance of communication and relationship building, navigating role and value conflicts, and managing unforeseen complexities inherent in a long-term collaborative research.

Final Words: A Content Analysis of Last Statements from Inmates on Texas's Death Row, 1982-2025

Mia Abboud Holbrook, University of Nevada, Reno
Emilee Arias, University of Nevada, Reno
Melissa Jarrell, University of Nevada, Reno
Jasmine Wong-Fortunato, University of Nevada, Reno
Shaun Galen, University of Nevada, Reno

This article analyzes final statements of condemned inmates from Texas's Death Row (n=589), building on research that emerged in 2005. Through content analysis, major themes are identified and categorized, with particular emphasis on statements before and after shifts in Texas policies. In 1996, Texas began allowing relatives and close friends of victims to witness executions. In 2019, Texas restricted public access to only verbal final statements made following execution. Findings suggest themes reflected acceptance or readiness, while others reflected pleas of innocence or injustice, revealing how condemned inmates communicate their final messages within evolving capital punishment practices.



Western Association of Criminal Justice

2:45pm

EVENT # 12

Emerald Bay 123

WACJ Pub Trivia

Moderator: Marianne Hudson, Boise State University

Even though our regular moderator, Andy Giacomazzi, is unable to host this year's event, he has put together a fun, action-packed Pub-style trivia game for us that Marianne Hudson will host! Find your teammates (2-4 per team), name your team, and get ready for some easy—and sometimes challenging—questions related to criminal justice and Lake Tahoe, plus a couple of surprise categories! Join us for this fast-paced trivia competition—unique to WACJ—and see if you can take home the honors as the 2025 WACJ Trivia Champions! [If you miss Andy, he will join you in Philadelphia as the 2026 host of Trivia Night at ACJS.]