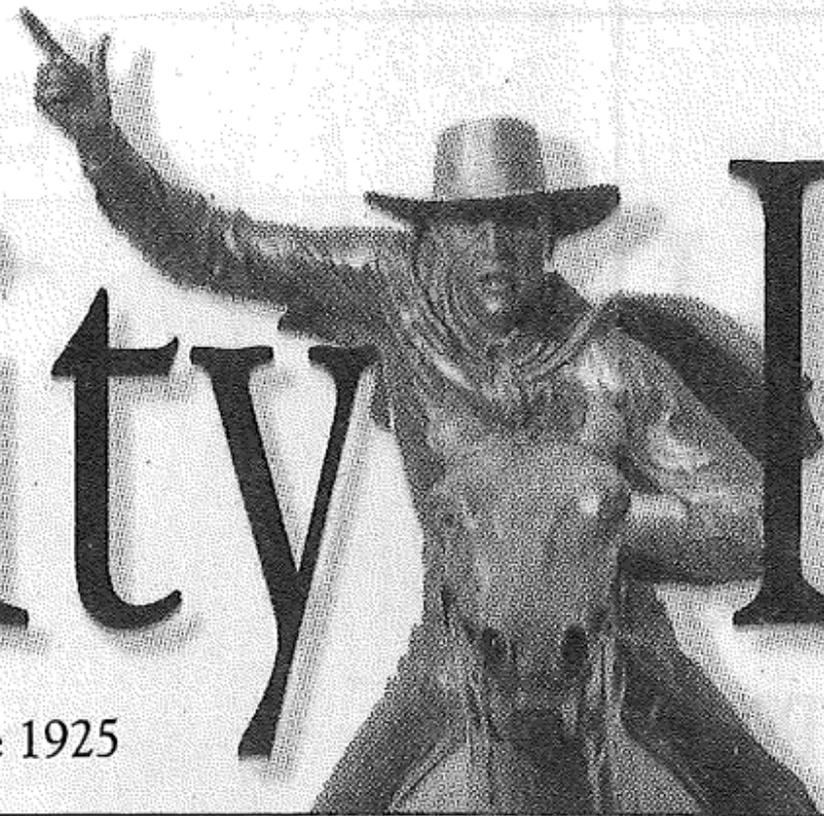


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Former death row inmate to speak at law school tonight

By Bryan Wendell/*The University Daily*

When students consider their feelings on the death penalty, they may base those thoughts on statistics in newspapers or features on "20/20."

Texas Tech students and members of the Lubbock community will have two opportunities on Monday to see Juan Roberto Melendez, a former death row inmate, speak about his experiences and stance on capital punishment.

"I think students will see the impact of putting a real face and a real person with a real-life story," said Adrian de la Rosa, president of the Equal Justice Society.

The Equal Justice Society is hosting Melendez along with the Hispanic Law Student Association, the Multicultural Law Student Association and sociology department at Tech.

Melendez will speak at 10:30 a.m. Monday in Holden Hall Room 150. He then will speak at 12:30 p.m. Monday in the law school forum of the School of Law.

The Tech School of Law is located south of the United Spirit Arena. De la Rosa said the forum is accessible from any entrance of the building.

According to the McGill University Human Rights Working Group Web site, Melendez spent 17 years, eight months and one day on Florida's death row.

Ultimately, according to the Web site, it came to light that the real killer made statements to more than 16 individuals either wholly confessing to the murder or saying that Melendez was not involved.

According to the Web site, when Melendez is not at his home in Puerto Rico, he speaks to audiences about his story.

De la Rosa said Melendez has visited several campuses, including Brigham

Speaker

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Young University and the University of Wyoming.

Since many Tech students are from Texas, de la Rosa said, they should not miss this opportunity to hear Melendez speak about the death penalty.

"His words are especially important in a state like Texas where capital punishment is prevalent," de la Rosa said. "We're the leading state in having death row inmates put to death.

"I guess, just because the legal system affects everybody, it would be really important for people to have a real-life example of how death row affects people, whether

they are guilty or innocent."

Melendez also will speak about the application of the death penalty to poor Americans and minority groups. De la Rosa said people in a minority group might not be granted equal representation in a trial.

"The question begs to be asked, 'Are the people on death row all guilty or are there other special circumstances?'" de la Rosa said.

Placing a human face on an otherwise faceless issue is a very rare opportunity, de la Rosa said.

"He's someone's son and someone's brother," de la Rosa said. "That's so much more real than seeing a story on 'Dateline' or in *The UD*."