



ArchivesSpace

Powell, David Lee; Papers

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M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository:	M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives
Title:	David Lee Powell Papers
ID:	apap407
Date [inclusive]:	1978-2010
Physical Description:	8.5 cubic ft.
Physical Location:	The materials are located onsite in the department.
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	This collection contains materials from David Lee Powell's cell on Death Row in Texas at the time of his execution on June 15, 2010.

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Identification of specific item, series, box, folder, David Lee Powell Papers, 1978-2010. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York (hereafter referred to as the Powell Papers).

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Biographical Note

Born in Campbell, a rural part of Texas in 1951, David Lee Powell was his high school valedictorian and enrolled in the honors program at the University of Texas at Austin at 16. Dropping out of college at 18, he became addicted to drugs and had a daily methamphetamine habit.

On May 18, 1978 in Austin, Texas, Powell was a passenger in a car pulled over by Officer Ralph Ablanado for not displaying a rear license plate. There were drugs in the car along with weapons. Officer Ablanado was subsequently shot multiple times with an AK-47 from the vehicle. A live grenade was also thrown from the vehicle. Although he was wearing a bullet proof vest, it did not protect against an assault weapon. Officer Ablanado was shot four times and died from his wounds.

Powell was convicted of Officer Ablanado's murder in October 1978. His then-girlfriend and the vehicle's driver, Sheila Meinert, served four years after testifying against Powell.

In 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Powell's conviction and death sentence. Powell was retried in 1991 and again sentenced to death. In 1994, this sentence was overturned by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. In 1999, a new sentencing hearing was held and Powell was again sentenced to death. On June 11, 2010, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles voted against clemency, then Texas Governor Rick Perry declined to stop the execution, and last minute appeals to the courts were not successful.

David Lee Powell was executed on June 15, 2010 by the state of Texas. He had been on Death Row for more than half of his life.

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Content Description

This collection contains materials from David Lee Powell's cell on Death Row. This includes journals/draft correspondence/notes written by Powell on legal pads, correspondence, newspaper clippings, court records and legal documents, a chess set with pieces hand carved by Powell, and administrative records related to an incarcerated individual's experience on Death Row such as inmate requests to an official, media release forms, and property requests.

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Arrangement of the Collection

The collection is currently unprocessed and is not yet arranged. Individual items may be difficult to find.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

Processing Information

The collection is unprocessed.

Access

Access to this collection is restricted because it is unprocessed. Portions of the collection may contain recent administrative records and/or personally identifiable information. Please contact an archivist for more information.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

All items in this collection were donated by the Texas After Violence Project, arranged by Mark Menjívar in 2023.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

See the Judith Filler Papers for related materials.

Separated Materials

The archivist transferred two monographs: *Catastrophic Heart*, a screenplay by Sally Norvell, and *DLP Wall: Images and notes from the wall of David Lee Powell's cell at the time of his execution in 2010 after spending 32 years on Texas death row* by Mark Menjivar to the book division of Special Collections. They will be catalogued and included in the University Library Catalog.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Powell, David Lee (1951-2010)
- Capital Punishment--Texas
- Death Row--Texas
- Death Penalty
- Criminal Justice and Prisons