

JSRI

JESUIT SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS

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2026 Guest Editor: Professor Christian Bolden, Ph.D.

JustSouth Editor: Scotty Wolfe, B.S.

Upcoming Events

With JSRI:

JustSouth Monthly Podcast.

Listen to [last month's podcast episode](#) with Dr. Christian Bolden about his January *JustSouth* article, [Research, Humanity, and New Possibilities Beyond the Carceral Space](#), hosted by Loyola junior, Si Starks.

Immigration on Film: Guest Speaker Series. Join JSRI Affiliate Fellow, Dr. Pablo Zavala's Immigration on Film class speaker series of local organizations and experts share the work they do and the challenges they face doing work with and for immigrants. **Select Fridays at 11:30–12:20 P.M. in Bobet 332.** April 17th: *The New Neighbor Project*. April 24th: *Unión Migrate*. See the flyer [here](#).

Women and Crime: Guest Speaker Series. Join JSRI Affiliate Fellow, Dr. Rae Taylor's Women and Crime class speaker series speaker series to hear from women & those who

Louisiana's Unfinished Business after *Ramos*

By William C. Snowden, Esq.

“Not Guilty.”

This was the second time an Orleans Parish jury rendered a verdict for Evangelisto Ramos—except this time, it was unanimous and an acquittal. The first time Mr. Ramos stood awaiting a verdict in 2016, he was convicted by ten jurors, despite two of them voting not guilty. **Louisiana was one of two states that did not require unanimity for a final verdict in criminal cases.** In 48 states, other than Oregon and Louisiana, an agreement of ten jurors would be deemed insufficient for a verdict—resulting in a hung jury and a retrial. Yet in Louisiana, non-unanimous verdicts were enough to convict people and send them to prison.

And it sent a lot. **Louisiana has consistently had [the highest incarceration rate in the country](#).**

Since 1898, non-unanimous verdicts have been part of Louisiana's criminal legal system. A product of a constitutional convention where their intentions were clear [“to establish the supremacy of the white race in this State to the extent to which it could be legally and constitutionally done.”](#)



The Reconstruction Amendments between 1865–1870 began to provide Black people access to power—including serving on a jury. The thought of Black people serving on juries in Louisiana created pause amongst many of the legislators at the 1898 constitutional convention. **Their aim was twofold: 1) to nullify any Black person's vote who served on a jury; and 2) to continue utilizing the exception of the 13th Amendment to continue the institution of slavery by another name—[convict leasing](#).** Intentionally nullifying Black people's vote on the jury, and thus their power, is why non-unanimous juries are also called Jim Crow juries. The verdict threshold changed from 9 votes in 1898 to 10 votes in 1974. Oregon's non-unanimous jury scheme was not rooted in racism like Louisiana's. Instead, theirs was [rooted in anti-semitism](#). Both were predicated on hate and neither belonged as a fixture in our criminal legal system.

work with and for women who are directly impacted by or work within the criminal legal system. This speaker series will examine the various roles and experiences of women in crime and criminal justice, focusing on perpetration, victimization, and in professional roles within the criminal legal system. **Tuesday April 7th: Formerly incarcerated women with Louisiana Parole Project.** **Thursday April 16th: Heidi Coleman and system-impacted guests from Operation Restoration.** Monroe 152 at 11:00–12:15 P.M. See the flyer [here](#).

The Trail They Blazed Closing Reception. Join JSRI, Iggy Vols, Monroe Library Special Collections & Archives, and the larger Loyola community as we celebrate closing out *The Trail They Blazed* exhibit. **Saturday, April 18th in the afternoon.** More details to come.

On Campus:

Dialogue Across Difference. Participate in structured, respectful communication between individuals with opposing viewpoints or diverse backgrounds—such as differing politics, race, or religion—to build understanding rather than win arguments. **Thursday, April 9th at 12:30–1:30 P.M. in the One Loyola Room, Danna Student Center.** See the [flyer here](#) & read [more information here](#).

Caffeinate the Electorate. Grab a coffee and learn about voting! Students can check their voter registration and register to vote while a coffee truck from La Petit Rogue Cafe will be giving out free coffee. **Wednesday, April 15th from 10 A.M.–1 P.M. in the circle turnaround outside of Bobet Hall.**

The Labor Spring! Come learn about your right as workers, how

Evangelisto Ramos walking out of the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office on Thursday, March 9, 2023.

In 2018, nearly two-thirds of Louisianans [voted to adopt](#) a Louisiana Constitutional Amendment that required unanimous convictions for all criminal trials occurring for charges brought after January 1, 2019. **The legislation was prospective, not retroactive, meaning it would only affect future charges, not past ones.** Despite Mr. Ramos being convicted prior to the law changing, his conviction was under appeal and eventually made its way to the United States Supreme Court. The Court [ruled non-unanimous juries unconstitutional](#), entitling Mr. Ramos to a new trial.

But what about the other people in prison like Mr. Ramos who were convicted via non-unanimous verdicts? Mr. Ramos' second trial resulted in an acquittal. **Could this mean other people were wrongly incarcerated due to a jury scheme now recognized as unconstitutional?** And, if so, what should Louisiana and Oregon do about it?

Here's where their [stories split](#).

After the United States Supreme Court ruled non-unanimous verdicts unconstitutional, Oregon's Supreme Court ruled that incarcerated people convicted via non-unanimous verdicts were entitled to have their cases reconsidered. The implementation of this retroactive ruling did not bring their criminal legal system to a grinding stop. **However, the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled the [opposite way](#), denying retroactive relief and ultimately punting the issue to the State legislature to apply retroactivity.**

The legislature fumbled the ball. Senator Royce Duplessis (D) [introduced legislation](#) in 2024 and 2025, creating an avenue for post-conviction relief for individuals convicted via non-unanimous verdicts—the ones now recognized as unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court. It passed committee but died on the Senate floor by a vote of 26-9. The opposition was mainly advanced by the Louisiana District Attorneys Association (LDAA) who declared revisiting these prior convictions would be too much work. Evidence may be lost or destroyed and witnesses may no longer be available. **The LDAA said that revisiting these convictions would bring the system to a halt. Even though that did not happen in Oregon.** But how many cases are we talking about? The number was not readily available and estimates varied from the 700s to the 1300s.

A [commission was created](#) to determine a more accurate number of individuals incarcerated in Louisiana as the result of a non-unanimous conviction. The Promise of Justice Initiative (PJI) has been leading the advocacy to have a retroactive application of the *Ramos* Supreme Court decision. The LDAA has been leading the opposition to PJI's efforts. **After independently conducting research, PJI estimates as of January 2026, there were 820 individuals incarcerated via non-unanimous verdicts; the LDAA's estimate was 847.**

The Jesuit principle of “faith that does justice” begs the question of what can justice look like in a post-*Ramos* Louisiana? Justice is a word that we use often but rarely define. **As someone who has worked in the Louisiana criminal legal system since 2012, I've come to develop my own definition of justice.**

Mine is: “The currency we spend to repair harm.” Non-unanimous juries have caused harm in Louisiana. Not only from their racist roots, but also in their tendency to more easily [allow innocent people to be convicted](#) of

a labor union improves members' lives, and how the labor movement contributes to the fight for racial and gender equality from professors, labor union leaders, and workers! Thursday, April 16th at 6:00 P.M. in Bobet 332. See the [flyer here](#).

Encountering Christ at the Border: Contemporary Migration Stories. Join Loyola Institute for Ministry's free online lecture series, *Walking with the Migrant: Jubilee, Justice, and Hope*. In this lecture, you'll hear firsthand accounts and pastoral reflections that reveal Christ in today's migrants and refugees. Thursday April 9th at 7–8:00 P.M. with Dylan Corbett & Marianela Guerrero. See [information about other dates, registration, and recordings here](#).

'The Trail They Blazed' & 'Leading Toward Justice: Loyola, New Orleans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights' are on display on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd floors of the Monroe Library. Through archival photographs and oral history excerpts, these exhibits immerse viewers in the daily realities and extraordinary courage of the era. They also explore the history of the civil rights movement on our own campus—highlighting student activism, faculty leadership, and key moments in Loyola's pursuit of racial justice. Together, these two installations connect statewide civil rights history with the university's lived story. See the [flyer](#) here.

In the Community:

Unión Migrante Immigration Court Watch. Unión Migrante is a democratic organization of immigrants, for immigrants. They are dedicated to fighting for immigration reform, providing training and offering advocacy to support immigrants in

crimes they did not commit. They also create harm for the survivors of crime, knowing that there is doubt in the accuracy of holding the right person accountable for the harm committed. And if an innocent person is serving time for a crime they did not commit, are we comfortable knowing the person who did remains free?

This is my definition of justice.

Do you have one?

The Framers of the Constitution recognized the value and importance of criminal juries when drafting the Constitution. I describe it as, "The right so nice they named it twice." The right to a criminal jury trial is both in Article III, Section II, and the Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. **This is the only right listed more than once in our Constitution, which symbolically represents the importance of assigning the people the power to be the last line of defense preventing a government from abusing its power.** Although non-unanimous juries were "constitutional," their racist intent, inhumane motivations, and lack of accuracy were abusive.

I don't use the term criminal "justice" system because, in its current form, it is a system that lacks justice. I use the term criminal "legal" system as an aspirational place holder for us to take action to build a justice system more worthy of that name. **A stepping stone towards creating a system with more accuracy and integrity in its convictions will be spending the time, money, and effort revisiting those who are incarcerated via non-unanimous verdicts.** If our system does not work for the innocent, it can not work for the guilty. And **if there is even one innocent person incarcerated from a non-unanimous verdict/conviction, it is our obligation to find them.**

William C. Snowden is a Professor at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, Director of [The Juror Project](#), and a member of the Commission on Non-Unanimous Juries.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans. Please send feedback to jsri@loyno.edu.

emergencies. As the threat of racist state violence against immigrant communities continues, Unión Migrante rises to meet it—and they want you to join! See the [post here](#).

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS

As our prison education program continues to grow, we need to make sure that each and every one has access to an exceptional educational experience. We can't do it without your help. [Give today!](#)

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