



Mexicans on Death Row

Ricardo Ampudia

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"They stole 15 years of my life." A native of Monterrey, Mexico, Ricardo Aldape Guerra was sentenced to death in 1982 for the first-degree murder of a Houston Police Officer that took place three months earlier. He spent 15 years in a maximum security prison in Huntsville, Texas, before his death sentence was overturned and he was set free.

Ricardo Ampudia, former Consul General of Mexico in Houston, Texas, explores the history and ethics of the death penalty in this fascinating look at its impact on Mexicans sentenced to death in the United States. A fervent opponent of capital punishment, Ampudia came to his beliefs because of his involvement in defending Aldape.

The author offers a brief introduction about the death penalty, both in the U.S. and around the world, and notes that in 2001, 90% of all known executions occurred in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Most of the countries that apply the death penalty have dictatorial regimes or repressive governments, with the U.S. being the notable exception. Subsequent chapters focus on the phenomenon of the death penalty in the U.S. and the work done by the Mexican government to protect its citizens abroad.

The final chapters focus on the Ricardo Aldape Guerra case. In this section written by Scott Atlas the attorney who handled his defense and Michael Mucchetti, both from the Vinson & Elkins law firm, it's revealed that the reopened investigation of the crime uncovered evidence that the jury never heard when Aldape was convicted. And in fact, a shocking pattern of police and prosecutorial intimidation, misconduct, and abuse came to light.

Originally published in Mexico as *Mexicanos al grito de muerte*, this absorbing account of the history, use, and flaws of the death penalty is a must-read for anyone interested in the criminal justice system in the United States.

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