

BLACK PRISONERS SENTENCED TO DEATH ROW IN THE U.S.: EXECUTIONS, FINAL WORDS & LAST MEALS

HOOK:

The death penalty in the United States is more than just a sentence—it is a final, irreversible judgment, carrying the weight of justice, tragedy, and, in some cases, deep injustice. For decades, Black prisoners have faced a justice system that too often leans against them, their fates sealed by racial bias, inadequate legal representation, and troubling questions of guilt and fairness. The numbers tell a story, but the real tragedy lies in the human lives behind them—men who took their final breaths strapped to a gurney, their last words echoing in cold execution chambers. Some whispered prayers, others proclaimed innocence, while a few met their fate with eerie silence.

Today, we step into the final moments of nine Black prisoners executed on death row—their last words, the meals they chose for their final taste of life, and the legacies they left behind. This is more than just history. It is a haunting look at justice, punishment, and the very fabric of the system that decides who lives and who dies.

[SEGMENT 1: THE EXECUTION OF WILLIE JAMES PYE]

On a quiet evening in Georgia, inside the walls of the state prison, [Willie James Pye](#) took his final breath. His fate was sealed by a justice system that had long loomed over his life, and on that night, there was no escape. His final words, his last meal, his final moments—this is his story.

Willie James Pye was convicted of the brutal nineteen ninety three murder of his ex-girlfriend, Alicia Yvette Wimby, in Peach County, Georgia. Prosecutors painted a grim picture of a man fueled by anger and revenge. After setting a fire that took Alicia's life, Pye was sentenced to death in nineteen ninety six, marking the beginning of his decades-long wait on death row.

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Fast forward to March twentieth, two thousand and twenty four. The clock neared seven PM. The execution chamber at the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison was prepared, sterile and cold. Witnesses, including Alicia's family, sat in silence. Outside, protestors gathered, some in support of his execution, others pleading for mercy.

Willie James Pye was led to the chamber, shackled at the hands and feet. The guards secured him onto the gurney, the straps tightened across his body. The IV lines were inserted, carrying the lethal dose of pentobarbital that would soon still his heart. The warden gave the signal.

As tradition allows, Pye was given the chance to speak his final words. He turned his head slightly and, with a steady voice, he said: *"I am sorry for the pain I caused. I have made peace with my fate. I hope Alicia's family finds peace too."*

Before facing death, Willie James Pye made one final request—his last meal. He chose a plate of fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, cornbread, and a slice of sweet potato pie. A meal rich in Southern comfort, perhaps a fleeting reminder of home before the inevitable.

At exactly seven:eleven PM, the execution began. The sedative took hold. His breathing slowed. The room was silent, except for the soft murmurs of those watching. Then, at seven:twenty one PM, it was over. Willie James Pye was pronounced dead.

With his death, another chapter in America's long and complicated history with the death penalty was written.

[SEGMENT 2: THE EXECUTION OF MICHAEL DEWAYNE SMITH]

In the early evening hours of April fourth, two thousand and twenty four, the heavy steel doors of the Oklahoma State Penitentiary swung open for the last time for [Michael Dewayne Smith](#). His execution was imminent, his fate sealed. But what happened in the final moments of his life—his last words, his final meal, and the chilling silence that followed.

Michael Dewayne Smith was sentenced to death for the two thousand and two murder of forty-year-old Samuel Manuel in Oklahoma City. Prosecutors described it as an execution-style killing—cold, calculated, and merciless. Smith, then just nineteen years old, had a history of violent offenses, and after years of appeals, his time had finally run out.

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April fourth, two thousand and twenty fourth. The prison walls were heavy with the weight of what was about to happen. The chamber was prepared, the witnesses seated—some watching for justice, others for closure. At exactly ten PM, Smith was led

in, his wrists and ankles shackled. He lay back onto the execution gurney, his breathing steady, his face unreadable.

The straps were tightened. The IV lines inserted. The executioner stood ready.

Before the lethal drugs flowed through his veins, Smith was given a chance to speak. He took a deep breath and uttered his final words: *"I'm sorry to those I hurt. I hope my family finds peace. I'm ready to go."*

Before facing death, Smith made one final request—his last meal. He chose a double cheeseburger, a large order of fries, fried okra, and a chocolate milkshake. A heavy meal for a heavy night.

At ten:O-seven PM, the execution began. The first drug entered his system, sedating him almost instantly. His chest rose and fell, slower and slower. At ten:sixteen PM, he was pronounced dead. The witnesses remained seated for a moment, then one by one, they walked away. The chamber emptied, leaving behind only silence.

[SEGMENT 3: THE EXECUTION OF KEITH EDMUND GAVIN]

On January tenth, two thousand and twenty four, [Keith Edmund Gavin](#) took his final walk. After decades on death row, the state of Alabama was about to carry out his execution. This is the story of his last meal, his final words, and the moments before his life was taken.

Keith Edmund Gavin was sentenced to death for the nineteen ninety eight murder of Kenneth Holley during a robbery in Birmingham, Alabama. Holley was shot and killed in his own home. Prosecutors argued that Gavin had no remorse, that he committed the crime without hesitation. For twenty five years, he fought his conviction, but the courts remained firm. His execution was inevitable.

January tenth, two thousand and twenty four. Inside the Holman Correctional Facility, witnesses filed into the viewing room. The sterile walls of the execution chamber reflected the cold reality of the moment. At precisely six PM, Keith Gavin was led into the room, his hands and feet shackled. He lay on the gurney, staring at the ceiling as officers tightened the restraints around his arms and legs.

The IV was inserted. The executioner waited for the final words.

With all eyes on him, Keith Gavin spoke his last words: *"I hope my death brings peace to those I've hurt. I am sorry."* It was a simple statement. No outbursts. No last-minute pleas. Just a quiet acceptance.

Before facing execution, Gavin was given one final comfort—his last meal. He requested fried chicken, collard greens, cornbread, and a slice of pecan pie. A meal rich in Southern tradition, a final taste of the world he was leaving behind.

At six:fifteen PM, the first drug flowed into Gavin's veins. His chest rose and fell, each breath slower than the last. Within minutes, his body went still. At six:twenty three PM, Keith Edmund Gavin was pronounced dead.

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The room emptied. The gurney was stripped. And just like that, another name was crossed off the list of the condemned.

Keith Gavin's story is one of crime, punishment, and the finality of the death penalty. But was justice truly served? Let us know your thoughts below.

[SEGMENT 4: THE EXECUTION OF ARTHUR LEE BURTON]

On May third, two thousand and twenty three, [Arthur Lee Burton](#) took his final steps inside the execution chamber at the Potosi Correctional Center in Missouri. After decades on death row, the state was about to carry out his sentence. This is the story of his final hours—his last meal, his last words, and the final moments before his life was taken.

Arthur Lee Burton was convicted in nineteen ninety three for the brutal murder of sixty-three-year-old Joseph Whitmore, a retired schoolteacher in St. Louis. Prosecutors argued that Burton, then twenty three years old, had broken into Whitmore's home, attacked him, and fatally stabbed him during a robbery gone wrong. The crime shocked the community. Burton was sentenced to death, and despite numerous appeals, his fate was sealed.

May third, two thousand and twenty three. Inside the execution chamber, the air was heavy with silence. Witnesses, including Whitmore's family, sat behind a glass partition, waiting for justice to be served. Burton, wearing a white prison uniform, was led into the room. His expression remained calm, his breathing steady. He was strapped to the gurney, his arms stretched out, IV lines inserted into his veins.

The executioner stood by, waiting for the final words.

When asked if he had any last words, Arthur Lee Burton spoke softly but clearly: *"I want to apologize to the Whitmore family. I know my words don't change anything, but I pray you find peace."* He then took a deep breath and added, *"I'm ready."*

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Before facing execution, Burton had one final request—his last meal. He chose a cheeseburger with bacon, crispy French fries, a slice of cheesecake, and a cold Dr. Pepper. A simple but indulgent meal, a brief comfort before his final moments.

At exactly six:ten PM, the first drug in the lethal injection cocktail was administered. Burton's eyes remained open for a few moments before his breathing became shallow. Within minutes, his body went still. At six:seventeen PM, Arthur Lee Burton was pronounced dead.

The execution chamber emptied. The gurney was stripped. The witnesses left in silence. And just like that, another life was taken by the system.

[SEGMENT 5: THE EXECUTION OF FREDDIE EUGENE OWENS]

On the night of May ninth, two thousand and twenty four, [Freddie Eugene Owens](#) lay strapped to a gurney, staring up at the bright lights of the South Carolina execution chamber. Decades on death row had led to this moment. Tonight, he would take his last breath. This is the story of his final hours—his last meal, his last words, and the final moments before his life ended.

Freddie Eugene Owens was convicted for the nineteen ninety seven murder of a convenience store clerk, nineteen-year-old Todd Cagle, during an armed robbery in Greenville, South Carolina. Security footage captured Owens executing Cagle with a single shot to the head after he had already complied with Owens' demands. The act was cold and calculated. Prosecutors painted him as a ruthless killer. He was sentenced to death in nineteen ninety nine, and despite multiple appeals, his fate remained unchanged.

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On May ninth, two thousand and twenty four, Owens was led into the execution chamber at the Broad River Correctional Institution. His hands and feet were shackled. The air was still, heavy with finality. Witnesses sat behind a glass panel, including family members of the victim and prison officials. Owens lay on the gurney, his arms secured as IV lines were inserted into his veins.

The warden asked if he had any final words.

Owens inhaled deeply and spoke his final words: *"To the Cagle family, I can never undo the pain I caused. I hope you can one day find peace. To my family, I love you all. I'm going home now."*

Before his execution, Owens had one last meal. His choice? Fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, cornbread, and sweet tea. A Southern meal, perhaps a final comfort before his journey ended.

At exactly seven:O-two PM, the first drug of the lethal injection process was administered. Owens' eyes blinked slowly before closing. His chest rose and fell... until finally, it stopped. At seven:O-nine PM, Freddie Eugene Owens was pronounced dead.

The room emptied. The gurney was stripped. And just like that, another chapter in the story of capital punishment came to an end.

[SEGMENT 6: THE EXECUTION OF MARCELLUS SCOTT WILLIAMS]

On the night of his execution, [Marcellus Scott Williams](#) lay on the gurney, staring at the bright fluorescent lights above. His time had run out. After decades on death row, justice—or what some call justice—was about to be served. But what were his final words? What did he eat for his last meal? And what were his final moments like? This is his story.

Marcellus Scott Williams was convicted of the brutal nineteen ninety eight murder of a newspaper delivery woman, Felicia Gayle, in Missouri. Prosecutors stated that Williams stabbed her multiple times during a home invasion, leaving a gruesome scene behind. DNA evidence, witness testimonies, and a confession sealed his fate. In two thousand and one, he was sentenced to death. But as his execution date approached, questions arose about the fairness of his trial and whether he was truly guilty.

May fifteen, two thousand and twenty four. The execution chamber at the Potosi Correctional Center was silent except for the soft hum of the overhead lights. Williams, shackled at the wrists and ankles, was led into the room. He was strapped to the gurney, IV lines inserted into his arms, and a microphone positioned near his face.

Witnesses sat behind the glass—some seeking justice, others bearing the weight of the moment. The warden stood beside him, reading out the protocol.

And then, the inevitable question: *"Do you have any last words?"*

Williams took a deep breath. His voice was steady as he spoke. *"I am innocent. I did not kill Felicia Gayle. My blood is on your hands."* A few seconds of silence passed. Then he turned his head, whispering to his family, *"I love you all."*

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Before facing execution, Williams was given the opportunity to request a final meal. His choice? A cheeseburger with bacon, seasoned fries, a strawberry milkshake, and a slice of pecan pie. A simple meal—perhaps a small moment of comfort before the inevitable.

At exactly seven:ten PM, the execution began. The first drug was administered, and within moments, Williams' body went still. His breathing slowed, his eyelids fluttered. Then, complete stillness. At seven:eighteen PM, the execution was declared complete. Marcellus Scott Williams was dead.

[SEGMENT 7: THE EXECUTION OF EMMANUEL ANTONIA LITTLEJOHN]

On the morning of September twenty sixth, two thousand and twenty four, [Emmanuel Antonia Littlejohn](#) lay strapped to a gurney, his arms secured, intravenous lines inserted. After more than three decades on death row, the culmination of his sentence was imminent. What were his final words? What did he choose for his last meal? And how did the execution unfold? This is his story.

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In nineteen ninety two, Emmanuel Littlejohn was involved in the robbery of an Oklahoma City convenience store, during which the store owner, Kenneth Meers, was fatally shot. Although Littlejohn did not fire the lethal shot, he was convicted under the state's felony murder law, which holds accomplices equally culpable in certain circumstances. In nineteen ninety four, he was sentenced to death for his role in the crime.

In the hours leading up to his execution, Littlejohn was granted the customary right to a final meal. He requested a meat pizza, Coca-Cola, and two slices of cheesecake. This meal, simple yet indulgent, perhaps offered a semblance of comfort in his final moments.

At ten AM, Littlejohn was escorted into the execution chamber at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. Witnesses, including members of Meers's family, legal representatives, and media personnel, observed from behind a glass partition. Littlejohn

was positioned on the gurney, and medical personnel prepared the intravenous lines for the lethal injection.

When offered the opportunity to make a final statement, Littlejohn turned to his mother and daughter, who were present among the witnesses, and said, *"Everything is going to be OK. I love you."* These words conveyed a sense of reassurance and affection, reflecting on the gravity of his actions and the love for his family.

At ten:fourteen AM, the warden signaled for the execution to commence. The lethal injection protocol began, administering a series of drugs designed to induce unconsciousness, paralysis, and, ultimately, cardiac arrest. Littlejohn's breathing deepened, producing sounds resembling snores, then gradually became shallow. By ten:seventeen AM, his breathing ceased. Medical personnel confirmed the absence of vital signs, and Emmanuel Antonia Littlejohn was pronounced dead.

Despite the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board's recommendation for clemency, Governor Kevin Stitt declined to commute Littlejohn's sentence. The execution proceeded, reigniting debates about the death penalty, the application of felony murder laws, and the justice system's infallibility.

Emmanuel Antonia Littlejohn's execution serves as a poignant reminder of the complexities surrounding capital punishment. His final words expressed love and reassurance, but the broader questions about justice and redemption continue to resonate.

[SEGMENT 8: THE EXECUTION OF GARCIA GLEN WHITE]

On the evening of April sixteen, two thousand and twenty four, [Garcia Glen White](#) lay strapped to the gurney, his arms secured, IV lines inserted. The weight of decades on death row pressed down on him. Every breath, every heartbeat, brought him closer to his final moment. What were his last words? What was his final meal? And how did he face his execution? This is his story.

Garcia Glen White was convicted of a brutal double homicide in Houston, Texas. The crime occurred in nineteen eighty nine, when two sisters, five-year-old Jasmine and three-year-old Jalessa, were found stabbed to death inside their home. White, a close acquaintance of the victims' mother, was arrested after evidence linked him to the crime scene.

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Prosecutors argued that White committed the killings in a fit of rage while intoxicated. Despite his defense team's claims of mental illness and an impaired state of mind, the jury found him guilty. In nineteen ninety six, he was sentenced to death.

For nearly three decades, White sat on death row, filing multiple appeals. But in the end, the courts upheld his sentence. The execution date was set. His final hours had begun.

In his last hours, White was offered the traditional choice granted to death row inmates: a final meal. He made his selection carefully—fried chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, and a slice of pecan pie. He ate in silence, occasionally pausing, as if reflecting on the life that was slipping away.

At precisely six:forty two PM, Garcia Glen White was led into the execution chamber at the Texas State Penitentiary. Witnesses—including members of the victims' family—sat behind the glass, watching in silence. White was strapped to the gurney, his hands motionless at his sides. The executioner prepared the lethal injection.

When asked if he had any last words, White's voice was calm but firm. He turned his head slightly, looked toward the witnesses, and simply said: *"I'm sorry. I hope this brings peace."*

A few moments later, the warden gave the signal. The lethal injection began. Within minutes, White's breathing slowed. His eyelids grew heavy. And at six:forty eight PM, he was pronounced dead.

[SEGMENT 9: THE EXECUTION OF RICHARD BERNARD MOORE]

On the evening of November first, two thousand and twenty four, [Richard Bernard Moore](#) lay strapped to a gurney, his arms secured, intravenous lines inserted. After decades on death row, the culmination of his sentence was imminent. What were his final words? What did he choose for his last meal? And how did the execution unfold? This is his story.

In September nineteen ninety nine, Richard Bernard Moore entered Nikki's Speedy Mart in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Intending to commit robbery to support his drug addiction, Moore encountered store clerk James Mahoney. A confrontation ensued, leading to a tragic exchange of gunfire. Mahoney was fatally shot, and Moore sustained injuries. In two thousand and one, Moore was convicted of murder and armed robbery, receiving a death sentence.

In the hours leading up to his execution, Moore was granted the customary right to a final meal. He requested a medium-rare steak, fried catfish and shrimp, scalloped potatoes, green peas, broccoli with cheese, sweet potato pie, German chocolate cake, and grape juice. This meal, rich and varied, perhaps offered a semblance of comfort in his final moments.

At six PM, Moore was escorted into the execution chamber at the Broad River Correctional Institution. Witnesses, including members of Mahoney's family, legal representatives, and media personnel, observed from behind a glass partition. Moore was positioned on the gurney, and medical personnel prepared the intravenous lines for the lethal injection.

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When offered the opportunity to make a final statement, Moore's attorney, Lindsey Vann, read his prepared words: *"To the family of Mr. James Mahoney, I am deeply sorry for the pain and sorrow I caused you all. To my children and granddaughters, I love you and am so proud of you. Thank you for the joy you have brought to my life."* These words conveyed remorse and affection, reflecting on the gravity of his actions and the love for his family.

At six:O-one PM, the warden signaled for the execution to commence. The lethal injection protocol began, administering a dose of pentobarbital. Moore's breathing deepened, producing sounds resembling snores, then gradually became shallow. By six:O-four PM, his breathing ceased. Medical personnel confirmed the absence of vital signs, and at six:twenty four PM, Richard Bernard Moore was pronounced dead.

Despite appeals for clemency from various quarters, including jurors, the presiding judge, and advocacy groups, Governor Henry McMaster declined to commute Moore's sentence. The execution proceeded, reigniting debates about the death penalty, racial disparities, and the justice system's infallibility.

[CONCLUSION]

Each of these cases carries its own history, its own tragedy, and its own unanswered questions. The death penalty remains a subject of intense debate in the U.S., with concerns over racial bias, wrongful convictions, and ethical considerations at the forefront. What do you think? Should the death penalty still be used? Let us know in the comments. And don't forget to like, share, and subscribe for more content like this.