

Glen Rogers' execution in Florida and the "pure evil" rationale for state killings

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Florida executed Glen Rogers on Thursday for the murder of Tina Marie Cribbs, 34, a mother of two, in Tampa in 1995. Rogers was also convicted and sentenced to death in California for the murder of Sandra Gallagher, 33, a mother of three, in Van Nuys that same year. He spent most of the last three decades on death row after being arrested at age 33.

Rogers, dubbed the "Casanova Killer" for his good looks and supposedly charming manner, was also connected to the killings of three others: Mark Peters, 72, a retired electrician, in Hamilton, Ohio; Linda Price, 34, mother of two, in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1995; and Andy Lou Jiles Sutton, 37, mother of four, in Bossier City, Louisiana.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed Rogers' death warrant on April 15. Rogers was denied a last-minute stay of execution by the US Supreme Court on Wednesday, allowing the execution to proceed. He died by lethal injection at the Florida State Prison near Starke and was pronounced dead at 6:16 p.m. local time, according to the Florida Department of Corrections.

In his final statement, Rogers spoke to his victims' family members, some of whom witnessed the execution, saying:

I know there's a lot of questions that you need answers to. I promise you in the near future the questions will be answered and I hope in some way will bring you closure.

He added:

President Trump, keep making America great. I'm ready to go.

It is unclear why he referenced the pro-death penalty resident of the White House in his final words.

Rogers was also known as the "Cross-Country Killer," having murdered victims from California to Florida. He killed three of them over a six-day period. At one point he confessed to police he had killed 70 people, including Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman in Los Angeles in 1994. He later recanted these confessions, and authorities found no evidence to support his earlier claims.

Tina Marie Cribbs met Rogers at a bar on the night of her murder; she was found stabbed to death in a Tampa hotel bathtub on November 7, 1995. The killings of his female victims all followed a similar pattern. All of them were mothers in their 30s; three of them were redheads.

To consider what in society stands behind the depraved acts of an individual like Glen Rogers is not to discount the suffering of victims of crime. In a rational society, it should assist in finding answers to why such heinous acts are perpetrated and serve as motivation for social change—improvements in mental health treatment, measures to end poverty, reform of the judicial system. But the political establishment, driven by its maintenance of class rule by means of violence and repression, is incapable of such considerations.

By any standard, Rogers' upbringing was horrific and violent. He was born in 1962 in Hamilton, Ohio, the second youngest of seven siblings. According to court records, as a child he was deprived of love and guidance. He frequently witnessed his alcoholic father beat his mother. He began using controlled substances at a young age and eventually became a chronic abuser of alcohol and amphetamines.

After his father lost his job due to drinking, the family moved into a rundown home and sank deeper into poverty. As an infant, Rogers showed little emotion and would rock back and forth and bang his head against the wall or other hard surface. Medical records showed that he suffered as a child from sleep disorders, ADHD and a lack of impulse control.

Rogers' mother would discipline her children for waking their father, including holding the young Glen's head underwater during baths, nearly drowning him. In response

to the stress of raising her children, she once threatened to drive herself and the children off a cliff, stopping just at the edge.

Recent defense filings revealed that from around age 10 Rogers was subjected to severe sexual abuse. He was raped by a woman from Hamilton, sold for sex by his older brother for drug money, and sexually assaulted by adults in the production of child pornography. Rogers said he was sexually and physically abused by staff at a juvenile detention center.

In a filing before the Florida Supreme Court in 2001, Rogers' attorneys detailed how forensic psychologist Robert M. Berland diagnosed Rogers with "a chronic ambulatory psychotic disturbance, in part a by-product of a series of brain injuries." His schizophrenia was measured at above the cut-off point, and he had the three symptoms of psychosis: hallucinations, delusions and mood disturbances.

He had a congenital brain defect, with impairment in both the left and right hemispheres. He suffered from ongoing manic disturbances. Berland emphasized that his condition was biologically induced.

Rogers also suffered for years from a relatively rare form of porphyria, a disorder caused by a buildup of natural chemicals in the body, which affected his skin, liver and most likely his brain.

After he was convicted of Cribbs' murder, prosecutor Karen Cox argued before the jury that the defendant's troubled background, mental state and medical conditions should not be considered mitigating factors in determining whether he should live or die. Instead, she asked them to consider the victim's difficult circumstances—she was never given a break in life, worked three jobs to support her children—and to discount the defendant's deprived childhood and troubled life. She argued:

And the thing is, to what point can we stop blaming our childhood, can we stop blaming the frailties of our parents? No one is blessed with perfect parents. We all try to be, but we all have our shortcomings. When you're 34 years old [Rogers' age at the time], is it fair to blame anybody but yourself? When is it that we as a society call upon the individual as an adult to take responsibility for their actions? He and he alone is responsible.

America today is far past the stage of considering rehabilitation as the first line of treatment for those caught up in the judicial system's dragnet. The Equal Justice Initiative reports that at least 20 percent of people on death

row suffer from a serious mental illness.

Researchers at Palo Alto University in California write that the prevalence of mental illness on death row is 40-50 percent, roughly twice the national average, although this percentage may be even higher due to underreporting in the legal system. And at least 10 percent of people currently sentenced to death are veterans of the wars prosecuted by US imperialism, many of them suffering from documented trauma disorders.

The US Supreme Court in 2002 in *Atkins v. Virginia* ruled that execution of individuals with intellectual disabilities, historically referred to as "mentally retarded," is unconstitutional as it is considered "cruel and unusual punishment," which is banned by the Eighth Amendment. The Court, however, left it up to the states to determine the criteria and procedures for identifying intellectual disabilities in capital cases. And it has not categorically ruled against the execution of all people with mental illness.

Twenty-four US states retain and authorize the death penalty, although only 10 states are actively scheduling or carrying out executions in 2025, including Florida. In Glen Rogers' case, the prosecutor urging the jury to sentence him to death discounted the results of a Wechsler test, which showed evidence that Rogers was of low intelligence, in addition to his well-documented mental illness.

She defaulted to the justification for state executions currently promoted by the fascistic majority on the high court and religious zealots promoting the concept of "original sin," arguing:

This crime, this act of pure evil, the punishment must fit it. Justice can be harsh and demanding, but there's not one of these facts that are easy. We ask you to consider these things not because they're easy because we all know they're difficult and they're right. You have the courage and moral strength to do justice in this case.



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