

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING ANNOTATIONS
Texas After Violence Project
Maurice Chammah, Fall 2010

(FOR GLIFOS AND OUR ARCHIVE GENERALLY)

First, pick annotations from the list in the folder on the computer in the green room, East wall. When you decide to do an annotation, write your name to the right of it on the list. This way we don't have doubles. Also, if you are going to do a lot, feel free to pick a new color and highlight all the ones you're doing.

Annotations need not be particularly long, but definitely cite sources and include your name as author.

Specific information for U.S. Supreme Court Cases:

Give a full citation at the top (see the example below), refer to Oyez.org (the specific page) to listen to the oral argument. Certainly this can be in addition to whatever version you want to initially use such as the Cornell or Justia site. These often have full text or information that Oyez does not.

Good things to include are dates and in addition to some legal information, some "regular" history, such as *What year did the murder take place? When did Mr. Simmons confess? And who was his victim?* This last question is in partial response to victims' family members, who I have often hear complain that people remember the names of those who committed the acts of violence, but not the names of the people they killed.

Where cases may be known in reverse (i.e., the person who files it talks about it as A v. B, but the Supreme Court is B. v. A.), we should explain that convention for people unfamiliar with it.

Also, if there is something noteworthy in the public/popular culture realm about the case, we should say that, as well. Shaka Sankofa aka Gary Graham; Kenneth McDuff; Napoleon Beazley --- for very different reasons, each of these cases created waves far beyond the crew of people who usually pay attention to capital punishment.

Sometimes there's a movie or a novel or book based on a case. That may be worthy of mention (and yes, we should exercise our judgment here, not attempt to give a full bibliography.)

Here is an example: Remember to put your name and the date at the bottom.

Roper v. Simmons

In **Roper v. Simmons (03-633)** 543 U.S. 551 (2005), the United States Supreme Court ruled by a 5-4 majority that it is unconstitutional, under the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments, to execute defendants for capital crimes committed as a juvenile (before the age of 18). In so doing, the Supreme Court reversed a 5-4 majority in the 1989 case *Stanford v. Kentucky*, in which the Court had found the execution of defendants who committed crimes between the ages of 15 and 18 not to be unconstitutional.

Christopher Simmons was sentenced to death in Missouri after confessing to having committing capital murder at the age of 17. In 1993, he and Charles Benjamin broke into the home of Shirley Crook and enacted a premeditated plot to burglarize Crook and throw her off a bridge.

In 2002, in *Atkins v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court found the execution of a mentally retarded person to be unconstitutional. In light of *Atkins*, Simmons appealed his death sentence. The Missouri Supreme Court then set aside Simmons' death sentence, and the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case shortly afterwards.

Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the majority opinion for *Roper v. Simmons*, drawing upon the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits the government from exercising "cruel and unusual punishment." Kennedy argued that the Court should interpret this prohibition keeping in mind "the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society." Since the Court's earlier decision in *Stanford*, Kennedy asserted, a national consensus had emerged that found the execution of juvenile offenders to be disproportionate punishment.

Reporter of Decisions, Supreme Court of the United States. Syllabus, **Roper v. Simmons (03-633)** 543 U.S. 551 (2005). <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/03-633.ZS.html>. Accessed 2 September 2010.

Joey Kolker, 3 September 2010

Once you have written the annotation, save it in a .doc file, with a title that includes the name of the annotation, the date, and your name. Another example: Roperv.Simmons-JoeyKolker-2September2010.doc

Then, if you are working on the computer facing East in the green room, save your file in the annotations folder in the desktop. If you are anywhere else, please email it to me: Maurice@texasafterviolence.org, as well as info@texasafterviolence.org