

Columbia University Journalism School Alumna Leads Balanced Justice Network Push for Plea Bargain Transparency

Evelyn Castillo-Bach graduated from Columbia Journalism School in 1993. Today she is the Executive Director of Balanced Justice Network - Changing the System

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The Executive Director of [Balanced Justice Network](#), Evelyn Castillo-Bach, launched the criminal justice reform organization in August 2023. She was inspired to form the organization by her personal encounter with the criminal justice system when her first-born son refused a 5-year plea deal from Miami-Dade prosecutors, lost at trial, and was sentenced to Life. The trial and sentence happened 22 years ago. She graduated Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1993.

"You can say I am a slow learner since it took me 21 years to overcome the shock of what happened to my son and apply my journalism training to his case," stated Castillo-Bach, who is leading an effort to reform how plea bargains are handled throughout the State of Florida, beginning with Miami-Dade County.



Partially handcuffed wrist symbolizes the border between freedom and incarceration



Logo arrow shows the path forward.

Castillo-Bach attributes her lack of knowledge about how the criminal justice system works to



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her delayed response in thinking like a Columbia J-School trained journalist. "I was no different than most people in thinking if you are accused and found guilty then justice is served, end of story. I was so wrong."

Today this Columbia University Journalism School graduate says she is using the reach of Balanced Justice Network to not only advocate for her son and reform the plea bargain system but to also teach. "I want to do my part to help

educate the general public and journalists about the criminal justice system machine and how it really works."

In an effort to advocate in her son's case, Castillo-Bach is seeking the assistance of journalists to discover how a rejected 5-year plea deal led to a Life sentence. Castillo-Bach described the case as a "one night he said, she said in a Miami Beach hotel room with no weapons, no drugs, no gangs, no serious injury, no organized crime and no DNA."

According to the [American Bar Association 2023 Plea Bargain Task Force Report](#), their study identified a significant differential between plea deals offered and the prison sentence administered when defendants choose to go to trial.

As stated in the 2023 Plea Bargain Task Force Report, Criminal Justice Section "...while in general some difference between the sentence offered prior to trial and the sentence received after trial is permissible, a substantial difference undermines the integrity of the criminal system and reflects a penalty for exercising one's right to trial. This differential, often referred to as the trial penalty, should be eliminated."

Evelyn Castillo-Bach

Balanced Justice Network - Changing The System

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