



Evening Session – 2018

ES1 Science in the Public Eye: Diversity, Research, and Communication

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The goal of this presentation is to provide information, based on the experience of national leaders in media, activism, and advocacy, regarding how the use of communication, research, and a commitment to diversity can move the objectives forward and enhance the view of forensic science in the public eye.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by revealing how the national news media and political activists influence public opinion. The community can apply the experiences, perspectives, and skills demonstrated to implement new methods of accurately presenting the work of forensic scientists in a manner lay people can understand.

Program Description: “A reporter, an activist, and a producer walk into a bar . . .” Please join us for a slightly different twist on this year’s meeting theme, *Science Matters*. The focus of the AAFS 2018 program is diversity, research, and communication in forensic science. By tapping resources from other professions, this presentation seeks to broaden the understanding of how media plays a pivotal role in the general public’s *perception* of forensic science and the criminal justice system. This session’s speakers come to the table (or bar) bringing their unique experiences regarding how to communicate the work of forensic scientists, their research, and their diversity to affect change in society.

Ryan Gabrielson is a journalist with the independent, non-profit investigative newsroom ProPublica that was awarded the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for public service. Mr. Gabrielson won the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for stories that exposed how immigration enforcement in Maricopa County, AZ, undermined both emergency response and law enforcement investigations. Mr. Gabrielson’s reporting has called attention to the apparent failure of the criminal justice system to understand the difference between a presumptive roadside drug test kit and the certainty of confirmatory testing. This lack of communication between science, law enforcement, and the courts has resulted in countless people being unnecessarily detained as well as documented cases of wrongful conviction. Mr. Gabrielson’s work has resulted in changes in policy and procedures in the criminal justice system throughout the country.

Aretha Marshall is an executive producer at Peacock Productions, NBC’s non-fiction production company, and is responsible for all aspects of talent development, casting for content, and programming. She previously worked as the managing editor for *Dateline*, winning the 2010 Emmy for Outstanding Coverage of a Breaking News Story in a News Magazine. Ms. Marshall’s recent work as Executive Producer of *Booking on the History Channel’s Navy Seals: America’s Secret Warriors* demonstrates the importance of having appropriate, knowledgeable people supplying facts to televised documentaries.

Kevin Oliver is a Washington state cannabis activist. Mr. Oliver is the executive director of the Washington state National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) and Political Action Committee (PAC). NORML’s mission is to move public opinion sufficiently to legalize the responsible use of marijuana. During his career, Mr. Oliver has relied on grassroots organizing and providing information, based on data and research, to achieve legal reform and to ensure that consumers have access to safe, convenient, and affordable marijuana. In advocating individual legal rights, law reform, and best practices, he brings a different perspective to the forensic science point of view of cannabis identification and toxicology.

Michelle Richmond is a television news producer specializing in legal, crime, and justice news shows. She provided editorial guidance and post-production review for such non-fiction programs as MSNBC’s *O.J. Simpson Chasing Freedom* and Lifetime’s *JonBenet’s Mother: Victim or Killer* to ensure the accuracy and quality of the productions. She also covered the Casey Anthony trial, analyzing witness testimony, motions, closing arguments, and jury instructions for news packages on *Good Morning America*, *World News Tonight*, and *Nightline*. Ms. Richmond routinely attends forensic conferences to develop storylines and content for news productions and brings in-depth knowledge regarding how forensic science is presented in the media.

Communication, Diversity, Research