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# Making Sentencing Just

With moderator **Prof. Laurie Levenson** and panelists  
**Hon. Steven González & Hon. Beverly Martin (ret.)**



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"I often think about the many incarcerated people who have appeared before me over the years, who are serving needlessly harsh sentences, and whose suffering I was not able to address as a judge. I am not sure what I will do next, but I hope I can help alleviate some of that suffering."

Hon. Beverly Martin, U.S. Court of Appeals, 11th  
Circuit (ret.)



“I've had a problem with mandatory sentencing in almost every case that's come before me... If I remain on the bench I have no choice but to follow the law. I just can't, in good conscience, continue to do this.”

Hon. J. Lawrence Irving, Southern District of  
California (ret.), 1990



“The burden of having given so many unjust sentences is a very heavy thing for me to carry around. I do not consider myself soft on crime, but I consider myself opposed to mandatory minimums for low level non-violent drug dealers who are basically addicts.”

Hon. Mark Bennett (ret.), Northern District of Iowa, 2017

“For a judge to be deprived of the ability to consider all of the factors that go into formulating a just sentence is completely at odds with the sentencing philosophy that has been a hallmark of the American system of justice.”

Hon. John S. Martin, Southern District of New York (ret.),  
2003





“The penalties have been increased enormously without having any impact. It's just a futile endeavor, a waste of taxpayers' money...These cases confirm my sense of depression about much of the cruelty I have been party to in connection with the war on drugs.”

Hon. Jack B. Weinstein, Eastern District of New York,  
1993



“Thanks mostly to the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 and the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, I was often prohibited from assessing a defendant’s history, personal characteristics or role in the offense. In sentencing, where judgment should matter most, I could not exercise my judgment. I felt more like a computer than a judge.”

Hon. Shira A. Scheindlin, Southern District of New York  
(ret.), 2017