1.6 The Judicial Challenges of Adjudicating Deaths in Custody in the USA
Judge Glenda A. Hatchett Esq.
The Hatchett Firm PC
Atlanta, Georgia

Learning Objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss why historically there has been such a wide disparity between the large number of people who have died in custody, as opposed to, the very few law enforcement officers who have been held accountable in the judicial system.

2. State and discuss the Supreme Court decisions that have defined the use of lethal force and the application of the doctrine of sovereign immunity and the implications in adjudicating these matters.

3. Discuss the intersection between the medical examiners’ work and the judicial system through a candid discussion about why the work of medical examiners is so important, if the judicial system is to be effective.

Abstract
This session will examine data concerning trends of deaths in custody, including a discussion of select high profile cases in the U.S., using specific case studies. Importantly, this session will highlight how forensic conclusions from medical examiners could influence the disposition of cases. Participants will be led through a discussion of key reasons why law enforcement officers are rarely held accountable in the U.S. judicial systems. Through this discussion, participants will learn about qualified immunity and the Supreme Court’s decisions surrounding the issue of reasonable standards, including an explanation of reasonable force, as defined by the Supreme Court. The session will end with a discussion about the series of recent deaths and catastrophic injuries inflicted by law enforcement officers and the potential impact on future legislation and Supreme Court decisions.