



Conscientious Acquittal : Your Power As a Juror

Thank you for your interest in *Conscientious Acquittal* training. This training has two goals:

- demonstrate that jurors can be agents of transformative justice; and
- empower participants to navigate jury selection, serve conscientiously as jurors, and deliver just verdicts.

In theory, jury selection (*voir dire*) will result in a relatively random group of individuals drawn from a representative cross-section of the community who can judge a case impartially and serve as the conscience of the community. In practice, prosecutors use the selection process to tilt the playing field toward their side, supported by judges who are more often than not former prosecutors themselves. The result is a system that dramatically favors conviction and punishment.

Prosecutors want to get rid of jurors who might be sympathetic to defendants. People of color, low income earners, those who are skeptical of police or the fairness of the criminal legal system, and people who understand their right to conscientiously acquit are prime targets. This training will teach participants how to play the jury selection game so that people who recognize the role of income inequality and structural racism in the criminal legal system will have a chance to sit on juries if they so choose.

We will cover:

- the power that each juror has to find a person guilty or not guilty based on the evidence and his or her conscience;
- how the criminal legal system keeps jurors unaware they have this power;
- how prospective jurors can maximize their chances of getting on a jury; and
- the life-saving impact of conscientious acquittal.

A key element of this training is a live, interactive practice jury selection with lawyers who will use their professional skills to try to identify people who are not predisposed to favor the prosecution. Potential jurors must give truthful answers to the questions lawyers ask during jury selection; they do not, however, have to volunteer information. How a person truthfully frames their answers will determine whether they are seated on the jury or not. In this training, we will not be giving participants “right” answers but will provide insight into why prosecutors are asking particular questions and give people a chance to think about how they can truthfully answer those questions.