



**Elizabeth Vartkessian** has been investigating the life histories of those facing the most severe penalties possible in the United States since 2004. She started working as a mitigation specialist in Houston, Texas at a time when it was the epicenter of capital punishment. There she learned and developed skills aimed at helping decision-makers have a full picture of her clients.

After starting a successful private practice and obtaining her Ph.D. in Law from the University of Oxford, Dr. Vartkessian and several colleagues created Advancing Real Change (ARC), Inc. a national non-profit with offices in Baltimore, MD and Jacksonville, FL dedicated to conducting high-quality life history investigations in criminal cases. As the founding Executive Director, Dr. Vartkessian is committed to having the history of an accused person at the forefront of their criminal case. She has worked as a mitigation specialist with defense teams in trial and post-conviction cases in state and federal jurisdictions and is an international expert on the collection and effective presentation of mitigating evidence, as well as the standard of care required by the defense in death penalty and juvenile cases.

In addition to having received her Ph.D. in Law, Dr. Vartkessian also holds an M.S. in Comparative Social Policy from the University of Oxford and B.A.s in Philosophy and Political Science from George Washington University, where she was a Presidential Scholar.