



Seizing the Momentum

Fall 2015

Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

New Article Highlights Cost of the Death Penalty in Texas

The average cost of a Texas death penalty case is \$2.3 million vs. \$750,000 for life in prison. Does that statistic sound familiar? It should. In 1992, the *Dallas Morning News* conducted a study providing these findings. This commonly referenced study was the most recent information available about death penalty costs for more than two decades, until now.

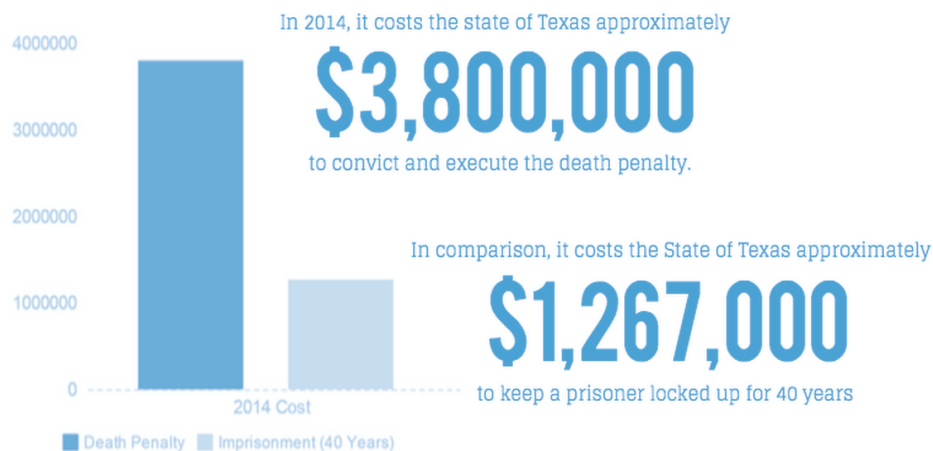
The Law Office of Texas Defense Attorney Fred Dahr recently released information exploring the opportunity costs of the death penalty. By applying current interest and inflation to the figures cited in the *Dallas Morning News* study, they were able to determine more current numbers and develop the graphs presented here.

Their data illustrates how money spent on the death penalty could be allocated instead to law enforcement, education, and emergency services. The full article is available at <https://texasdefenselaw.com/research-center/death-penalty-cost-texas/>.

Cost is a pillar among arguments in opposition to the death penalty and a key factor in the steady decline in new death sentences. Cost also plays a major role in the growing number of conservatives concerned about the death penalty. While we know for certain that the death penalty is more expensive than alternative punishments, detailed information about the true costs to Texas counties is not readily available.

(Continued on page 2)

How Much Does One (1) Death Penalty Conviction Cost?



Scheduled Executions 2015-2016

November

11: Raphael Holiday

January

20: Richard Masterson

27: James Freeman

February

16: Gustavo Garcia

March

9: Coy Westbrook

22: Adam Ward

Also in this issue:

Texas death penalty developments

In Memoriam: Dr. Sara Young

TCADP welcomes new North Texas Outreach Coordinator

Register now for the TCADP 2016 Annual Conference

Thank you, donors!

Review of Sundance Channel's original series, *Rectify*



During a symposium at the State Capitol on October 23rd, former Bexar County District Attorney, **Sam Millsap**, pointed out the “madness” behind these opaque costs:

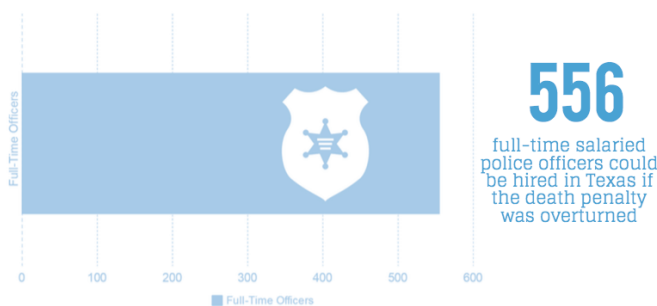
More than 20 years ago, the *Dallas Morning News* determined that Texas was spending \$2.3 million per execution—3X the cost of keeping a prisoner in maximum security for life. It would be frightening to know what that cost is today. And yet, year after year, Texas, whose legislature will do almost anything to avoid spending money, chooses madness over cost-effectiveness.

In the recent capital murder trial of Gabriel Hall in Brazos County, costs reached a new level. Hall was the first person sentenced to death in Texas this year. The county will pay for extensive DNA testing and multiple trips to interview witnesses from the Philippines, Hall's native country. According to “Gabriel Hall Trial Comes at High Cost to Brazos County” from *KBTX Bryan/College Station*, all involved with the case admit it will likely be the most expensive trial in Brazos County history. The defense team reports spending \$852,000, while Brazos County District Attorney Jarvis Parsons estimates the prosecution only spent \$80,000. According to *KBTX*, “He does not think staff time should be included in cost estimates.”

For more information about why the death penalty is so expensive, please review our cost sheet at tcadp.org/get-informed/texas-death-penalty-facts. Thank you to the **Law Office of Texas Defense Attorney Fred Dahr** for granting permission to reprint the graphs used in this article.

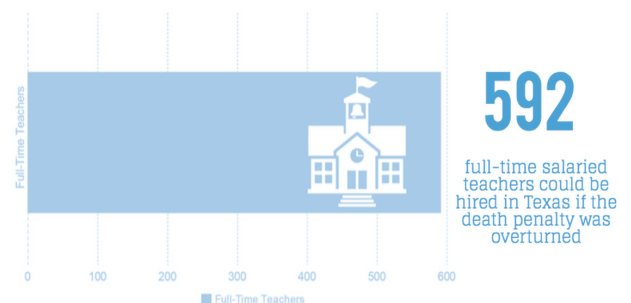
What could be paid for instead of the death penalty:

LAW ENFORCEMENT



What could be paid for instead of the death penalty:

EDUCATION



In Memoriam: Dr. Sara Young, Psy. D.

I was deeply saddened to learn about the passing of TCADP member, Dr. Sara Young, on September 23, 2015. Sara was a retired psychologist whose work touched the lives of many people in her home state of Kentucky and, later, her adopted state of Texas. She practiced in the Houston area.

Sara provided generous financial support for TCADP for many years. She was incredibly kind and encouraging of our efforts, and I felt a strong connection to her, even though we only knew each other through correspondence.

I had the wonderful privilege of meeting Sara and her husband, Tom Shurling, this past July, however, while visiting my family in Louisville, Kentucky (she moved back to the state in 2014). In one of life's happy coincidences, Sara and Tom lived a mile from my parents' house. I spent a memorable hour with them in conversation about a wide range of topics, including Texas politics and, of course, our progress towards ending the death penalty. I will be forever grateful for that opportunity to learn more about Sara, her life's work, and her passion for social justice. She was a beautiful soul who will be greatly missed.

-Kristin Houlé



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Seizing the Momentum

Seizing the Momentum is published quarterly by the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP) and distributed to TCADP members and allies. It is available online and twice a year in print.

Issue #50, Fall 2015: <http://tcadp.org/get-informed/newsletter-archives/>

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Fall 2015 Contributors: Vanessa Akins; Kristin Houlié; Jason Redick

Thank you to Lindsey Pearlstein and Tina Trimble for volunteering with TCADP!

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Texas Death Penalty Developments (As of November 5, 2015)

Executions: 12 out of 25 nationwide

Scheduled executions in 2015: 1

Scheduled executions in 2016: 5

States that have carried out executions this year:
6 (Texas, Missouri, Georgia, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Florida)

States where executions are currently on hold:
12, including Ohio, Oklahoma, and Arkansas

Individuals currently on death row in Texas: 251

Death row exonerations: 1 (13 total in Texas; 156 nationwide)

Prosecutors disbarred: 1

Jury rejections of the death penalty: 3 (including 2 in Nueces County)

New death sentences: 3 (Bexar, Brazos, and Smith Counties)

More information on specific cases is available at
www.tcadp.org.

"Whether innocent men and women are being wrongfully convicted or not, the cost of the death penalty in America can no longer be sustained."

-Sam Millsap, Former Bexar County
District Attorney



**Connect with TCADP
on Facebook!**

View photos from our events, connect with more than 4,000 other supporters, and learn about important death penalty developments. "Like" us today!



TCADP Welcomes New North Texas Outreach Coordinator

TCADP is proud to introduce you to our new North Texas Outreach Coordinator, **Jason Redick**. Jason's commitment to social justice and advocacy make him a great addition to our team. Learn more about Jason and his new role below.



Jason became involved in efforts to end the death penalty in November 2013 while serving as the Minister of Youth and Young Adults at Holy Covenant United Methodist Church in Carrollton, Texas. He also served as the staff liaison to Advocates for Justice and Peace at Holy Covenant, a social justice ministry that is formally affiliated with TCADP. In that capacity, Jason organized execution vigils and hosted events featuring voices of experience on the death penalty, among other activities. He also serves on the Board of Church and Society of the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church and is active with the Latino Center for

Leadership Development. For the past two years, Jason has co-organized the Youth Civil Rights Bus Tour, an annual trip through the South to recall historical events and landmarks.

While serving at Holy Covenant, Jason was invited to become a pen pal for a man on Texas' death row. This experience opened his eyes to the injustices of the death penalty in Texas and strengthened his commitment to the issue. At the same time, Jason was exposed to key concepts for organizing communities of faith to take action and effect change in various areas of social justice. Serving as TCADP's North Texas Outreach Coordinator brings together his passions for community organizing and ending the death penalty. Jason looks forward to connecting with people and groups from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, political and religious affiliations – and everyone in between – to think critically about the death penalty and reduce its use in Dallas and Tarrant Counties. Contact him at jason@tcadp.org.

"An Evening with Anthony Graves"

Millennium Youth Entertainment Complex—Austin, Texas

On October 29, 2015, TCADP, Lifespark, and Anthony Believes, LLC hosted "An Evening with Anthony Graves" in east Austin. Anthony spent 18 years in prison — including more than 12 years on death row — as an innocent man. He was exonerated four years ago. Several special guests were in attendance, including **Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton** and **Elvis Nolasco**, an actor on the TV series "American Crime." A special thanks to **Kenneth Thompson**, host of the "The Wakeup Call" on KAZI 88.7 FM in Austin, **Shirley Lee Terry**, and the entire staff at Millennium for helping to make this event possible.



Pictured from left to right: Sheriff Greg Hamilton, Vanessa Akins, Kenneth Thompson, Anthony Graves, Kristin Houle



Pictured from left to right: Kenneth Thompson, Elvis Nolasco, Anthony Graves, and Darwin Hamilton



Sundance Channel's *Rectify* shows life after death row by Vanessa Akins



Photo courtesy of sundance.tv

Winner of a 2015 Peabody Award, *Rectify* takes on the daunting task of accurately portraying life after death row. Daniel Holden, played by Aden Young, spent the last 19 years of his life on Georgia's death row. After DNA evidence emerges, Daniel's sentence is overturned.

Incarcerated shortly after his eighteenth birthday, Daniel spent his adult life behind bars. He is an introspective, thoughtful, and incredibly well-read man. Daniel used books to help him find some type of solace during his time on death row.

The first season of *Rectify* covers Daniel's first week of freedom. Although he is out of prison, he is still confined by the constant reminders of his time on death row. *Rectify* painstakingly details Daniel's ongoing struggle and adjustment to everyday life.

"I had convinced myself that kind of optimism served no useful purpose in the world where I existed.

Obviously, this radical belief system was flawed and was, ironically, a kind of fantasy itself."
-Daniel Holden (Aden Young)

Through expert casting, setting, and musical scoring, the series reflects the transition from the colorless world of death row to the muted tones of Daniel's "freedom." The use of muted colors throughout the series is reflective of the murky nature of both Daniel's freedom and innocence. Even though his sentence is overturned, he has not been exonerated and a new case is looming.

Creator Ray McKinnon, better known for his roles on gritty series like *Deadwood* and *Sons of Anarchy*, was inspired by real life cases of death row exonerees. A Georgia native, McKinnon masterfully conveys the inner-workings of small town politics and their impact on the criminal justice system.

"For those men and women still locked away unjustly, I wish hope justice and freedom from your chains in all their forms."

-Ray McKinnon at 74th Annual Peabody Awards

Now in its third season, *Rectify* is a show begging to be discussed and analyzed. I highly recommend this series for anyone looking for another perspective on the death penalty and its immeasurable impact. Seasons 1 and 2 are available on Netflix and Season 3 is available for streaming on Amazon, iTunes, and Google Play.

"At the least I feel that those specific coping skills were best suited to the life there, behind me. I doubt they will serve me so well for the life in front of me, so I will seriously need to reconsider my world view."

-Daniel Holden (Aden Young)



Daniel with his friend and fellow death row inmate, Kerwin. Photo courtesy of sundance.tv

Thank You for Your Generous Support

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TCADP thanks the following individuals and organizations for your generous contributions between July 25 and November 5, 2015. Your financial support is critical to all of the activities and events described in this newsletter. Please let us know if we inadvertently left you or anyone in your household off of this list. We apologize in advance if we missed anyone.

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* Signifies Partner for Justice or
Sustaining Member, TCADP's
recurring giving programs



Time: 8:00am—5:30pm
Unity of Houston
2929 Unity Drive
Houston, TX 77507

TCADP 2016 Annual Conference

At the Epicenter of the Death Penalty

Saturday, February 20, 2016



Register Online & Book Hotel:

<http://tcadp.org/what-we-do/annual-conference>

The Westin Oaks at the Galleria is the official hotel for the TCADP 2016 Annual Conference. Special rates for rooms are available now through January 29, 2016. Book today!

Register Today!

TCADP 2016 Annual Conference
February 20, 2016 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM
Unity of Houston
Houston, Texas

_____ \$50 TCADP Member
(After December 31, \$55)

_____ \$55 Non-Member
(After December 31, \$60)

_____ \$20 Student
(After December 31, \$25)

_____ \$35 Luncheon ticket only

_____ Enclosed is an additional contribution
toward the conference.

**Lunch
preference:**
Vegan
Vegetarian
No restrictions

Rates will increase again after February 13, 2016.

Please make checks payable to TCADP or go online to
www.tcadp.org to register.

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TCADP; 2709 S. Lamar; Austin, TX 78704.

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Registration includes continental breakfast and lunch.

Questions? Contact the TCADP office at 512-441-1808.

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TCADP 2016 Annual Conference At the Epicenter of the Death Penalty

Saturday, February 20, 2016, 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM

Unity of Houston
2929 Unity Drive, Houston, Texas

Registration Options:

- By mail (see form on page 7)
- Online at www.tcadp.org
- By phone (call the TCADP office at 512-441-1808)

- **General Membership Meeting**
- **Panel Discussion**
- **Keynote Speaker**
- **Annual Awards Luncheon**
- **Workshops**
- **Exhibitors**

Advance Registration by December 31, 2015:

TCADP Member \$50 / Non-Member \$55
Student \$20

Pre-Registration by February 13, 2016:

TCADP Member \$55 / Non-Member \$60
Student \$25

After February 13, 2016:

TCADP Member \$60 / Non-Member \$70
Student \$25

Registration fee includes continental breakfast and lunch.

Luncheon Ticket Only — Keynote and Awards

12:00 to 2:00 PM (Must purchase by February 13) \$35

More information:

<http://tcadp.org/what-we-do/annual-conference/>