



Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

2709 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78704
Tel/Fax: 512-441-1808 – Email: khoule@tcadp.org – Website: www.tcadp.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, February 17, 2010

CONTACT: Kristin Houlé, TCADP Executive Director
512-441-1808 (office); 512-751-7009 (cell); khoule@tcadp.org

Abolitionists Gather in Dallas for Annual Conference

Judge, priest, journalist and others to be recognized

(Austin, Texas) — More than 120 anti-death penalty advocates from across Texas will gather this Saturday, February 20, 2010 in Dallas for the 12th annual conference of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP). This event, “Seizing the Momentum – Building Capacity, Community, and Coalition,” is co-sponsored by the Southern Methodist University Human Rights Education Program. It includes a panel discussion featuring Richard Dieter, Executive Director of the Death Penalty Information Center; murder victim’s family member Dr. Linda White; and Baylor University Law School Professor Mark Osler. Michael Landauer, assistant editor for the *Dallas Morning News* Editorial Page, will moderate the discussion on “Framing the Message for Diverse Constituencies.”

During the conference, TCADP will present its annual awards to those who have made outstanding contributions to the abolition movement. Judge Charlie Baird, who is retiring this year from the 299th District Court in Travis County and who served on the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals from 1990 through 1998, will receive a Courage Award in recognition of his constant and courageous voice of opposition to the death penalty. Also receiving a Courage Award is Father Mark Miller, who serves as the pastor of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Odessa and is the founder and leader of the recently-formed TCADP Odessa Chapter.

The organization will present a Media Award to David Grann of the *New Yorker* for his in-depth investigation of the Cameron Todd Willingham case and his subsequent article, "Trial by Fire: Did Texas Execute an Innocent Man?" (September 7, 2009). Willingham was executed on February 17, 2004 for the deaths of his three young daughters. Nine fire experts who have examined the case since the time of conviction have concluded that the evidence does not support the finding of arson for which Willingham had been sentenced to death.

Ron Carlson of Houston will receive an Appreciation Award for his contributions to TCADP’s Victims’ Outreach Program, his involvement in the TCADP Speakers’ Bureau, and his participation in the Texas 81st Legislative Session. On March 13, 2009, Ron testified in favor of House Bill 682, which called for the repeal of the death penalty in Texas. During the hearing, he shared with legislators the story of his sister’s murder and his process of forgiving her killer, Karla Faye Tucker. The Academy of Oriental Medicine in Austin, which has provided TCADP with meeting and training facilities for more than 10 years, also will receive an Appreciation Award

“The theme of this year’s annual conference reflects the tremendous shift that has occurred both nationally and here in Texas in the last few years - a shift toward abolition of the death penalty,” said Kristin Houlé, TCADP Executive Director. “In this time of economic uncertainty, we urge our elected officials to divert our state’s valuable resources to programs that truly prevent crime and provide meaningful victims’ services, rather than perpetuate the cycle of violence.”

The 2010 TCADP Annual Conference will take place at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas (3300 Mockingbird Lane) from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM. All are welcome.

For more information, visit www.tcadp.org.

###