



# Seizing the Momentum

Fall 2017

Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

## From Adherent to Critic: Remembering Mark White

Former Texas **Governor Mark White** died in Houston on August 5, 2017 at the age of 77. During his time as the 43<sup>rd</sup> governor of Texas, from 1983 to 1987, White was a champion of education reform. Though some of his legislation was met with controversy, much of it still stands today, including limiting class size and the “no pass, no play” rule.

Governor White’s opinions on education reform never wavered, but after his tenure in elected office as governor and, four years prior to that, attorney general, he began to question his stance on the death penalty. Once a staunch supporter who oversaw 19 executions during his administration, White later spoke out against the inherent flaws of the criminal justice system. In an essay for *Politico* magazine in 2014, he wrote:

“As I’ve watched how the death penalty has been administered over the years, both in Texas and around the country, it has become increasingly clear to me that we just don’t do a good job at any phase of the process, from ensuring that capital trials are fair to the actual handling of executions themselves.”

(“Why I Changed My Mind About the Death Penalty,” May 5, 2014)



Former Texas Governor, Mark White, delivering statements of support for Duane Buck to former Harris County DA, Mike Anderson in 2013.

White became a vocal critic of the death penalty and, particularly, the risk of wrongful convictions. He raised concerns about numerous death penalty cases, including Cameron Todd Willingham, Duane Buck, Milton Mathis, Charles Hood, and, most recently, TaiChin Preyor, who was executed in July 2017.

White was a valued member of The Constitution Project’s Death Penalty Committee and the American Bar Association’s Texas Capital Punishment Assessment Team.

In an interview with the *Houston Chronicle* earlier this year, White gave a character-defining quote: “I never give up on this state, on this country. If you give up, then you’re part of the problem.”

As an elected official, an advocate, and an ally, Mark White will be greatly missed.

### Also in this issue:

*In Memoriam*

You’re invited: TCADP 2018 Annual Conference

Book review: *Salvation on Death Row*

Thank you, donors!

Texas by the numbers: Sentenced to death before 21

### Scheduled Executions 2017

November

8– Ruben Cardenas

December

14– Juan Castillo



We were saddened to learn about the death of **Ron Carlson**, who passed away in Houston on August 31, 2017. Ron's sister, Deborah Ruth Carlson Davis Thornton, and Jerry Lynn Dean were murdered by Karla Faye Tucker and Daniel Ryan Garrett on June 13, 1983. Both Tucker and Garrett were sentenced to death, a punishment Ron originally supported. He ultimately forgave Tucker and Garrett, however, and worked hard to commute their death sentences.



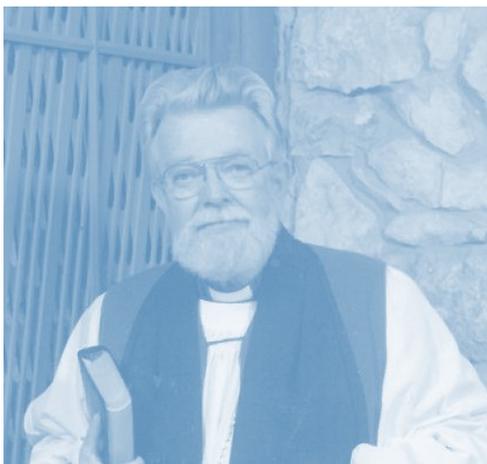
Garrett died in prison in 1993. Karla Faye Tucker was executed on February 3, 1998. Ron was invited by Tucker to witness the execution as one of her representatives. When he did so, he became the first known victim's family member to witness an execution on behalf of the murderer.

*"I wish that the killers had simply received life without the possibility of parole so that my family and I would not have been torn apart by the death penalty and could have begun the hard work of grieving and healing years earlier."*

An active member of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation, Ron spoke at numerous events over the years, including an observance of the 200<sup>th</sup> execution to take place during the administration of then-Governor Rick Perry in 2009. That same year, he testified in support of abolition of the death penalty before the Texas House Subcommittee on Capital Punishment at the State Capitol.

TCADP honored Ron with a Courage Award in 1999 at the organization's first annual conference, which took place in Austin. In 2010, we presented him with an Appreciation Award for serving as a voice of experience on the death penalty issue.

Read more about Ron at <http://tcadp.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/ron-carlson.pdf>.



We recently learned about the passing of our friend and TCADP member **Bishop Robert (Bob) Hibbs** earlier this spring. As bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, Bishop Hibbs served alongside then-Diocesan Bishop Jim Folts until his retirement in December 2003. Prior to his appointment as Bishop, he served on the faculty of the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin and as rector in several Episcopalian churches throughout Texas. He passed away at his home in San Antonio on April 17, at the age of 84.

Bishop Hibbs first became involved with TCADP as a participant in a Religious Leaders Dialogue Panel we organized with San Antonio faith leaders in 2011 at Trinity University (you can watch a video of his remarks on our website). Following that event, he worked with us at the state legislature and on numerous cases of individuals facing execution.

Bishop Hibbs was an eloquent writer, wonderful storyteller, and a compassionate soul who will be greatly missed.



### Board of Directors

Dr. Mike Renquist, President  
Dr. Lauralee Harris, Vice President  
Casey Magnuson, Treasurer  
DJ Compton, Secretary  
Shannon Breeding  
Rev. Susan Buchanan  
Dr. Keeley Crowfoot  
Dr. Kimberly Harrison  
Dr. Alan Knox  
Prof. Ana Otero  
Karla Williams

### Staff

Kristin Houlé, Executive Director  
Vanessa Akins, Communications Coordinator

### 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 #58, Fall 2017:** <http://tcadp.org/get-informed/newsletter-archives/>

**Editor:** Vanessa Akins

**Fall 2017 Contributors:** Vanessa Akins; Kristin Houlé;

Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty  
2709 S Lamar, Suite 109  
Austin, TX 78704  
512.441.1808  
[info@tcadp.org](mailto:info@tcadp.org)  
[www.tcadp.org](http://www.tcadp.org)  
[@TCADPdotORG](https://twitter.com/TCADPdotORG)

TCADP would like to give a special thanks to Karla Williams for volunteering in the TCADP office!



## Texas Death Penalty Developments (As of October 27, 2017)

**Executions:** 6 out of 21 nationwide

**Stays of execution granted:** 6

**Scheduled executions in 2017:** 2

**States that have carried out executions this year:** 8 (Texas, Missouri, Arkansas, Virginia, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Ohio)

**Individuals currently on death row in Texas:** 233

**New death sentences:** 2 (Walker and Jefferson County)

**Jury rejections of death penalty:** 2 (Dallas County)

More information on specific cases is available at [www.tcadp.org](http://www.tcadp.org).

### Texas Executions 2009-2017



**Connect with  
TCADP on  
Facebook!**

View photos from our events, connect with more than 4,900 other supporters, and learn about important death penalty developments. "Like" us today!



## You're Invited: TCADP 2018 Annual Conference Dallas, Texas

The TCADP 2018 Annual Conference – “Transforming the Landscape” – will take place on Saturday, February 17, 2018 at Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas. You'll find a registration form on page 5 of this newsletter; you can also register online at <http://tcadp.org/what-we-do/annual-conference/>. Take advantage of pre-registration rates between now and February 8, 2018. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.



### Keynote Speaker: Reverend Sharon Risher

We are honored to announce that **Rev. Sharon Risher** will serve as our keynote speaker. Rev. Risher was a staff chaplain and trauma specialist with Parkland Hospital in Dallas from 2012-2016. Her mother, two cousins and childhood friend—Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, Tywanza Sanders and Myra Thompson, respectively—were killed along with five others at Emanuel AME Church (“Mother Emanuel”) in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. As our keynote speaker, she will address her experiences with the criminal justice system in the wake of these horrific murders and her longstanding opposition to the death penalty.

### Panel Discussion: Exonorees

More than 30 men have been exonerated in Dallas County for crimes they did not commit. Our morning panel will feature several individuals who were wrongfully convicted and exonerated. They will discuss transformations they've seen with criminal justice reform since their exonerations, as well as improvements that still need to be made to the system.

Confirmed panelists include:

- **Christopher Scott** was wrongfully convicted of capital murder in 1997 and spent 13 years in prison as an innocent man. After his release, Christopher founded House of Renewed Hope to help exonerate other wrongfully convicted prisoners.
- **Johnnie Lindsey** was wrongfully sentenced to life in prison in 1983 and spent 25 years and 11 months behind bars until DNA evidence proved he was innocent. He is now an investigator for House of Renewed Hope and fights for legislative changes regarding the criminal justice system.
- **Johnny Pinchback**, who in 2011 became the 22nd person exonerated through DNA testing in Dallas County. He spent 27 years in prison as an innocent man.

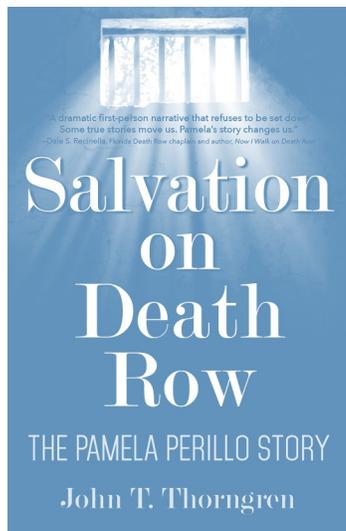
### Accommodations

This year's official conference hotel is Marriot TownPlace Suites in DeSoto. Please contact the hotel directly at 972-780-9300 (ext. 551) to book your room under the TCADP block by January 26, 2018. For more information, please visit <http://tcadp.org/what-we-do/annual-conference/>.

TCADP 2018  
Annual Conference  
TRANSFORMING  
THE LANDSCAPE

More program details and the announcement of our 2018  
Award winners coming soon!





At the age of 24, **Pamela Perillo** was sentenced to death in Harris County. *Salvation on Death Row* by **John T. Thorngren** tells the story of Pamela before, during, and after her time on death row.

Written in first-person through Pamela's perspective, the book feels more like a diary or personal conversation. Pamela's story of redemption through faith is extremely compelling, but beyond that it gives a perspective of individuals on death row that is often forgotten. By chronicling even her most painful memories, Thorngren makes you see Pamela for what she is, human. It can be easy to forget that the individuals on death row had lives before prison, lives, that are more times than not, filled with mental and physical abuse and trauma. In reference to her forgetting much of her life before the age of ten, Pamela states, "Surely infancy follows a divine plan to protect the memory of little ones. Sometimes I'm thankful for those very early years being blank slates of memory, for the brief time in my life before I was faced with all that would follow."

Pamela spent 20 years on death row. She was retried and resentenced in 1984; that sentence was then overturned in 1999. The prosecution offered her life in prison, which she accepted; her sentence was then commuted. As a part of the general population, along with joining faith-based groups, Pamela began working with Patriot Paws, a program where inmates train service dogs for veterans diagnosed with PTSD.

*Salvation on Death Row* will be released in January 2018. The book is available for pre-order through [KiCamProjects.com](http://KiCamProjects.com) and [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). All author proceeds will be donated to Patriot Paws.

# Register Today!

**TCADP 2018 Annual Conference**  
**February 17, 2018 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM**  
**Friendship-West Baptist Church**  
**Dallas, Texas**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$60 TCADP Member

\_\_\_\_\_ \$80 Non-Member

\_\_\_\_\_ \$30 Student

\_\_\_\_\_ \$35 Luncheon ticket only

\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is an additional contribution toward the conference.

**Lunch preference:**  
Vegan  
Vegetarian  
No restrictions

*Rates will increase after February 8, 2018.*

Please make checks payable to TCADP or go online to [www.tcadp.org](http://www.tcadp.org) to register.

**Mail payment and registration form to:**  
TCADP; 2709 S. Lamar; Austin, TX 78704.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration includes breakfast and lunch.**

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



## Thank You for Your Generous Support

TCADP thanks the following organizations and individuals who contributed between July 28 and October 27, 2017. Your financial support is critical to the activities and events described in this newsletter. Please let us know if we inadvertently left you or anyone in your household off this list. We apologize in advance if we missed anyone.

Angelle Adams\*  
 Paula Adams  
 Penny Adrian  
 Elizabeth Aguirre\*  
 Dr. Kate Allen\*  
 Trista Allen\*  
 Ruby Apodaca  
 Sheryl Ballard\*  
 Mardi Baron\*  
 Kathy Barrett\*  
 Niki Bergin\*  
 William Bolin\*  
 Shannon Breeding\*  
 Marian Breen  
 Carolyn Britton  
 Rev. Guston Browning  
 Rev. Susan Buchanan\*  
 Bill and Julia Buchholz  
 Evelyn Burleson\*  
 Helene Burns\*  
 Ruben Catano\*  
 Rev. Valda Jean Combs\*  
 Dr. Keeley Crowfoot\*  
 Arthur L. Dietz\*  
 Laurie and Eric Dobson  
 Rick Doucette  
 Pat Doyle\*  
 Kay Duffy-Taylor\*  
 Thomas Dum\*  
 Martha Eberle\*  
 Lisa Emerson\*  
 Abimbola Farinde\*  
 Cindy Fisher\*  
 Dr. Gene Franks

Sarah Fucik  
 Robert Gartner  
 Tom Green\*  
 Lauralee Harris\*  
 Cecelia Hawkins\*  
 Mary Heartlein\*  
 Jan Heinrichs\*  
 Judy Holloway\*  
 John Houlé and Kathy Hayden\*  
 Lisa C. Huston  
 Paula Keeth\*  
 Rev. and Mrs. Bernard Kern  
 Dr. Alan and Cindy Knox\*  
 Lorraine Leyendecker  
 Theresa Luby  
 Fr. John Manahan\*  
 Rita Martin  
 Ruth McLendon  
 William R. and Lyn Mefford\*  
 Bob Michael  
 English Miller\*  
 Pat Monks\*  
 Bill Mueller\*  
 Anne Mund\*  
 Jay Nickel\*  
 Prof. Ana Otero\*  
 Linda Price\*  
 John Reiser\*  
 Dr. Mike Renquist and Rev. Dr.  
 Georjean Blanton\*  
 Aftab Siddiqui\*  
 Jim and Nancy Simons  
 Rev. Cheryl Smith\*  
 Annette Spanhel\*

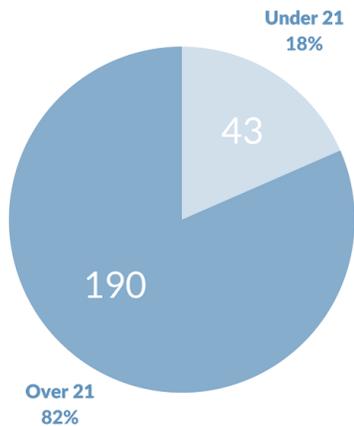
Skyler Stevens\*  
 Marianne Tassone  
 Mary and Robert Trimble  
 Jared Tyler\*  
 Elly Van Laar\*  
 Bob and Jean Van Steenburg\*  
 Julie Walters and Eric Van  
 Steenburg\*  
 Lynn Walters\*  
 Joseph Watt, Jr.  
 Linda White\*  
 Bob Whitmarsh  
 Karla Williams\*  
 Bishop Joe Wilson\*  
 Rich Woodward\*  
 Gay Z. Wright\*  
 Rev. John Yeaman\*  
  
 Methodist Federation for Social  
 Action-Rio Texas Chapter  
 St. John's United Methodist Church  
 (Austin)  
  
 \*Partners for Justice or Sustaining  
 Members (TCADP's recurring giving  
 programs)

# Thanks

YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT HELP!



### Texas Death Row Age at time of offense



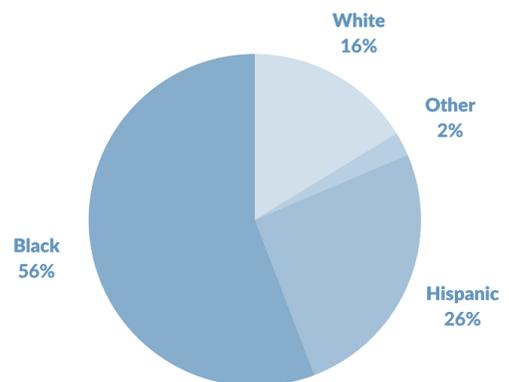
Judge Ernesto Scorsone of the Fayette County Circuit Court of Kentucky ruled in September that it is unconstitutional to execute anyone who committed their offense before the age of 21. In his ruling, Judge Scorsone cited research that the human brain is not fully developed by that time.

In an “Urgent Action” for Clinton Young, Amnesty International recently cited a 2015 paper by the National Institute of Justice at the US Department of Justice on young adults and the justice system stating, “Young adults are developmentally distinct from older adults. Recent scientific work suggests that the human brain continues to develop into the 20s, particularly in the prefrontal cortex region, which regulates impulse control and reasoning.”

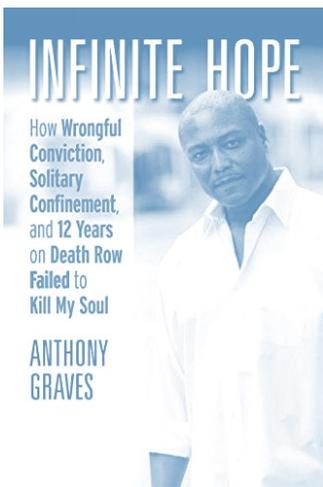
Executing an individual for a crime committed before the age of 18 was ruled unconstitutional in 2005 by the United States Supreme Court (*Roper v. Simmons*). This led to the removal of 29 individuals from Texas’ death row. Of those currently on death row in Texas, 43 individuals were under the age of 21 at the time of the crime. This represents about 18 percent of the total death row population; 36 of the 43 individuals are people of color (84 percent). 75 individuals have been executed by the State of Texas for crimes they committed before they were 20.

In 2017, Texas scheduled executions for 3 individuals who were under 21 when the crime was committed. This includes Clinton Young who received a stay on October 18. Although there were several individuals involved in the case, Young, who was only 18 at the time of the crime, was the only one sentenced to death.

### Texas Death Row Under 21 at time of offense



### Infinite Hope by Anthony Graves



*Infinite Hope* is an argument against the death penalty through one man's personal story. It is about a man enduring a life on death row year after year, when he knows that he is one hundred percent innocent and that his exoneration is unlikely.

Poignant and skillfully wrought, Graves writes about fighting for his dignity, trying to maintain his sanity, the excruciating reality of being innocent behind bars, and how he endured one setback after another as he and his lawyers chipped away at the state's case against him. *Infinite Hope* exposes an extreme version of when the judicial system is wrong and, as Graves describes it, "what people go through when they're treated as disposable."

*Infinite Hope* will be released in January 2018. You can pre-order a copy today at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

2709 S. Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, TX 78704



Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit # 215  
Austin, TX

Is your membership current? Call the TCADP office at (512) 441-1808 to see if it's time to renew. Thank you!

## TCADP 2018 Annual Conference Transforming the Landscape

**Saturday, February 17, 2018, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

Friendship-West Baptist Church  
2020 West Wheatland Road, Dallas, Texas

### Registration Options:

- By mail (see form on page 5)
- Online at [www.tcadp.org](http://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**

### Pre-Registration by February 8, 2018:

TCADP Member \$60 / Non-Member \$80  
Student \$30

### After February 8, 2018:

TCADP Member \$75 / Non-Member \$95  
Student \$35

**Registration fee includes breakfast and lunch.**

### Luncheon Ticket Only — Keynote and Awards

12:30 to 2:30 PM (Must purchase by February 8th) \$35

### More information:

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