



SEEKING JUSTICE IN TEXAS

TEXAS COALITION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY

WORKING THROUGH EDUCATION AND ACTION

SPRING 2009

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Texas Death Penalty News and Alerts

Capital Defense Training in Houston, June 13 and Dallas, June 14

Claudia Whitman of the Quixote Center will conduct a one-day workshop for family members and community-based allies of capital defendants and death row prisoners. These trainings provide educational materials and one-to-one technical assistance to help participants understand the complexities of the capital legal system and effectively communicate with attorneys or other officers of the court.

Saturday June 13 - 12:00 to 6:00pm Montrose Library conference room, 4100 Montrose, Houston. Contact Nancy Bailey at houston@tcadp.org or (281) 933-4925 to make a reservation.

Sunday June 14 - 12:30 to 6:00pm Atrium A (on the 3rd floor) in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center at SMU, Dallas. Contact Rick Halperin at dallas@tcadp.org or (214) 768-3284, or Susybelle Gosslee (214) 349-0269 to make a reservation.

A flyer for the event can be found at <http://www.tcadp.org/uploads/documents/capitaldefensehandbookflyer.pdf>.

Legislative Update

House Bill (HB) 682, sponsored by Representative Jessica Farrar, calls for the repeal of the death penalty in Texas. TCADP has worked closely with Rep. Farrar and her staff to secure a hearing on HB 682 and build support for the bill. Read about our progress and other legislation of interest on page 4.

Thomas Cahill in New York and Houston

Bestselling author, Thomas Cahill, recently published *A Saint on Death Row*, highlighting the compelling story of Dominique Green, a Texas death row inmate executed in October, 2004. The book includes references to our own David Atwood's involvement with Dominique. Read more about the book and Thomas Cahill on page 5.

facebook

TCADP is on Facebook and mySpace.

Look for us on Facebook and become a supporter of our group "Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty" and cause "Stop the Texas Death Penalty" and help us spread the word. We are also on mySpace at www.myspace.com/tcadp. Link up!

Impending Executions

April

7 Jose Garcia Briseno

15 Michael Rosales

30 Derrick Johnson

May

19 Michael Lynn Riley *

June

2 Terry Hankins

August

20 David Wood

* If all currently scheduled executions proceed, Michael Lynn Riley will represent Governor Rick Perry's 200th execution during his terms as Governor.

Troubled Economy Motivates Discussion on Cost of Capital Punishment

Multiple states are considering the repeal of the death penalty as a cost-saving measure. Read more about the costs associated with seeking the death penalty in capital trials on page 7.



A Note from the President

Hello to each of you. I am Bob Van Steenburg and the TCADP Board of Directors has recently elected me to be the President of TCADP for the next two years. I am truly honored by this vote of confidence. I am also humbled to be walking in the footsteps of Dave Atwood, Jim Coombes, and Rick Halperin who have led this organization in the past. TCADP stands where it does today because of their vision and dedication. And what an exciting time to be leading TCADP! The winds of change are blowing everywhere. New Jersey abolished the death penalty just a little over a year ago. This year legislatures in Kansas, Maryland, Montana and New Hampshire are seriously considering the repeal of death penalty laws. Our neighbor New Mexico has just repealed the death penalty. And hold on to your hats - a sub-committee in our own Texas state legislature held a hearing on a bill to repeal the death penalty. Whoa!! If it's possible to discuss abolition in Texas, it's possible to discuss it anywhere. Yes, "The times, they are a changin'."

With this progress it is more important than ever for each of you to continue your support of TCADP and our objectives. Here is how you can help: First, continue to talk to your family and friends about ending the death penalty. I believe there are more people who agree with us than we realize. I know when I begin a discussion with folks I often think the conversation will not go anywhere, yet I often find people saying they agree with my position. I am often too cautious. I am learning to be bolder; I ask you to do the same. Second, contact your elected officials in the state legislature. After spending a lot of time in the Capitol this year I am convinced that many lawmakers need their constituents to raise the issue of the death penalty as a concern. Numbers make a difference with legislators. We have to contact them and get others to do likewise. Third, contact leaders in your community (educators, religious, business, and civic) and urge them to contact legislators. We don't necessarily need large numbers here. Two, three or four individuals in each district can have a significant impact. And finally, you can support TCADP with your financial contribution. Times are hard right now for all of us, and we are feeling the economic impact as well. But, as you all know, the work of TCADP must go on, particularly now that we are beginning to make progress in the legislature. Please continue your financial support of the organization.

In closing I want to welcome our newest board members: Rich Woodward from Bryan-College Station is returning to the board after a two year absence; Linda White from Magnolia has been re-elected to the board; Les Breeding from Austin is a new board member but a well known supporter and worker for abolition in the state legislature. Welcome to all. I particularly look forward to working with Rich and Linda as my fellow officers on the board (see page 10). We also have had three individuals leave the board: Jim Coombes has served TCADP in several different capacities for more than 10 years; Jean Van Steenburg has been a board member for four years; Kristin Houle has also left the board but as you all know now serves as our Executive Director. Thanks to Jim and Jean for all their work. I am certain that they will continue to be involved with our efforts. And Kristin, well she just moves on to do more for us.

Thanks to each of you for all that you do. And know this: We will succeed!

Bob Van Steenburg,
TCADP Board President



**Daily News
on the
Texas
Death Penalty**

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Spring Issue #25, 2009 Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall

Send your name, address, and phone number with annual dues to the TCADP office to receive quarterly newsletters.

All donations are tax-deductible. Thank you! If you are

already a member and would like to receive the TCADP newsletter via email, send your name and email address to info@tcadp.org.





From the Executive Director

Dear TCADP Members,

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed their time, energy, talents, and resources to TCADP over the past few months. It has been my pleasure to meet so many of you during my visits with chapters around the state and during our annual gathering in Austin. Your commitment to ending the death penalty in Texas is awe-inspiring!

As a result of your steadfast participation, our organization is growing in leaps and bounds both in terms of new supporters and new visibility. We will continue to build on the tremendous momentum generated by our 2009 Annual Conference, our first-ever TCADP Lobby Day, and our legislative achievements thus far by increasing our membership, expanding our presence throughout the state, and reaching out to key constituencies, particularly the family members of murder victims. TCADP has launched a formal partnership with Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation, a national organization with members in Texas, to reach out to more families with the aim of ensuring that their voices are included in every aspect of our work against the death penalty in Texas.

While we celebrate our successes both here in Texas and around the country, we also must continue to protest our state's appalling number of executions in 2009. Already this year, Texas has accounted for 12 of the 20 executions that have taken place nationwide. And even more shamefully, we project that in June we will mark the 200th execution to take place during the administration of Texas Governor Rick Perry. That's nearly 50 more than his predecessor, former President George W. Bush, and far and away more than any other governor in U.S. history.

As we approach this somber milestone, TCADP will provide you with information and resources that can be used to organize public education events in your communities. Over the next few months, we also intend to ramp up our outreach and education programs and to secure speaking engagements in faith communities, on college campuses, and with civic groups such as Rotary and Lions Clubs. If you would like to host an event in your community, please contact TCADP Program Coordinator Vicki McCuistion at info@tcadp.org or 512-441-1808.

Thank you again for all that you do to advance the cause of abolition. Have no doubt that the day is coming when we will follow in the footsteps of our esteemed colleagues in New Jersey and now New Mexico in abandoning this barbaric practice once and for all.

In solidarity,

Kristin Houli
TCADP Executive Director

Executions under Texas Governor Rick Perry	
2001	17
2002	33
2003	24
2004	23
2005	19
2006	24
2007	26
2008	18
2009 (Jan—Mar)	12
Total	196

TCADP Welcomes New Interns!

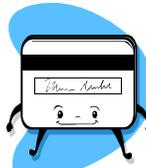
For the Spring semester, two student interns from St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas joined the ranks of TCADP's small but committed staff.

Graham Chilton is a native Houstonian and a graduate student at St. Edward's University, pursuing a Master's Degree in Conflict Resolution through the School of Business/Management. He began work as a TCADP intern on February 10, 2009 and has focused primarily on creating the TCADP Legislator Database and tracking legislation on death penalty-related bills. Graham's previous work experience involved internships in both the Attorney General's and Governor's Offices.



Alexis Konevich, originally from Los Altos, California, is a senior at St. Edward's University. She is majoring in Philosophy and English Literature and studied abroad in Florence, Italy. Alexis first became involved with the death penalty issue in high school, when she played a role in a theatrical production of "Dead Man Walking", through which she also had the opportunity to meet Sister Helen Prejean. Alexis began work on February 18; she coordinated all the logistics for the TCADP Lobby Day and is assisting with our new database and with various outreach projects.

We are delighted to be working with Graham and Alexis and appreciate all of their contributions to TCADP!



Become a member online, at www.tcadp.org

Thank you!

What an historic time for TCADP activities in the Texas legislature! Our goal for the current legislative session was to secure a hearing on HB 682, which calls for the repeal of the Texas death penalty. Members of the TCADP Legislative Committee have spent a great deal of time in the Capitol, walking the halls and talking to legislators and their staffs. We have had some very significant results.

On March 10th TCADP held its first ever Lobby Day. TCADP developed some excellent intelligence from these visits that will help us as we continue to work on this issue. Read more about the lobby day on page 5.

victim family member), Rob Owen (UT School of Law), Adam Gershowitz (South Texas College of Law), Rich Woodward (Texas A&M), Andrew Rivas (Texas Catholic Conference) and Les Breeding, (TCADP Board member and legislative consultant). Additionally, at least four other individuals spoke as private citizens. One of these was Sister Elizabeth Riebschlaeger, who literally stole the show with her remarks and her response to a question from one of the committee members as to how we can be true to our faith tradition on this issue when the Bible/Old Testament calls for an eye for an eye.

"I want to mention one last study that was done by Katherine Baicker. (Professor Baicker is a Harvard trained economist and was a member of President Bush's Council of Economic Advisors.) Dr. Baicker's study looked at data across the entire country to find the fiscal impacts of death penalty cases. She found that on average a single death penalty conviction leads to an increase in spending at the county level of more than \$2 million...Specifically she found that when faced with the costs of a successful death penalty trial, the average county reduces spending on police protection by 3.2% What this means is that counties are sacrificing police protection, something that can clearly reduce crime, for capital punishment trials, which are unlikely to have any effect on crime at all."

-Dr. Rich Woodward, economist

On March 12th the Capital Punishment subcommittee of the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee held a hearing on HB 682. Testimony was provided by several individuals: Ron Carlson (murder victim family member), Martha Cotera (murder

Approximately 40-45 people attended the hearing. Of these, 24 signed in as supporting the bill and 1 person signed in as opposing the bill. The bill was left pending in the subcommittee. There now appear to be three options for its future: First, the subcommittee can decide not to refer the bill to the full committee. Second, it can refer the bill to the committee for its consideration. This could lead to a vote by the full committee. Third, the full com-

"We believe that the moral strength of our citizens and state funds are better spent on seeking to understand the reasons for violence in our society, and establishing positive, creative programs that will provide the social environment in which families and their children can live out their lives. Such programs should truly support their dignity and provide them with opportunities to flourish and grow into productive citizens. We believe that perpetuating the death penalty is a negative action that only sanctions the use of violence by justifying the taking of a human life. It contributes nothing of positive value to our social environment.

We believe that the people of the State of Texas are becoming increasingly aware that there are more effective and constructive ways to reestablish peace in our homes, neighborhoods, cities and the State. We believe therefore that the time to eliminate the death penalty from life in the State of Texas has come..."

-Sister Elizabeth Riebschlaeger,
on behalf of the US Justice and Peace Committee of the
Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX

mittee could decide to hold its own hearing. It remains to be seen which of these three potential options will in fact occur. Still, the hearing was a very positive event for TCADP and an excellent first step in our legislative effort.

Where do we go from

here? First, we will track HB 682 to follow its progress. Second, we will continue to identify and talk to House members who might be willing to sign on as a co-author to HB 682. We will also continue our efforts to have a bill sponsored in the Senate in the next legislative session.

Alert: The House Subcommittee on Capital Punishment has heard testimony on bills that address some of the most egregious flaws in the death penalty system:

HB 298 disallows the testimony of an informant or alleged accomplice in a capital case if the testimony is given in exchange for a grant or promise by the prosecuting attorney of immunity, reduction of sentence or leniency. This bill also would prohibit testimony from a "jail house snitch" unless it is corroborated by an electronic recording.

HB 2267 calls for the separate prosecution of two or more defendants who have been charged with capital murder and states that a defendant who is found guilty in a capital murder case only as a party under Section 7.02(b) of the Texas Penal Code (the infamous "law of parties") may not be sentenced to death, and the state may not seek the death penalty in any case in which the defendant's liability is based solely on that section.

HB 1152 prohibits the execution of a person with mental retardation at the time of the commission of the crime.

Please call and fax your representative. Ask him/her to support HB 298, HB 2267, and HB 1152 and to urge the full House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee to consider these bills.

In January, Representative Jessica Farrar introduced into the Texas Legislature House Bill 682, calling for the repeal of the death penalty in Texas. To strengthen this important step in our efforts towards abolition, TCADP organized and carried out the first-ever TCADP Lobby Day. Lobby Day aimed to garner support and generate debate regarding the cause of death penalty repeal in Texas. On Tuesday March 10, 2009, participants in Lobby Day had the option of traveling to Austin to personally meet with Texas Representatives or faxing or phoning their Representative from home. A week before Lobby Day, the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee scheduled House Bill 682 for a sub-committee hearing. Having achieved this goal prior to the event, Lobby Day participants ardently focused on urging their Representatives to support House Bill 682.



Participants gathering in the Member's Lounge for the TCADP Lobby Day.

The response we received from members and other advocates was remarkable - over 50 people participated either from home or in person at the Capitol in Austin! Those who came to Austin traveled from varied places, such as Commerce, San Antonio and Cypress, and represented over 20 diverse legislative districts. Those who were able to phone or fax their Representatives comprised an additional 11 districts.

At the Capitol, Lobby Day started with an address by Representative Farrar. Her Legislative Director, Veronica Garcia, spoke on the importance of constituent visits and tips for talking to legislators or their staff members. TCADP Board member Bob Van Steenburg then explained the status of House Bill 682, including a discussion of TCADP's strategy for moving the bill forward. After receiving a primer on how to converse with representatives and the main talking points to be touched upon, participants then began their individual meetings with legislators. Lobby Day participants also conducted meetings with key members of the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee. At least one House member agreed to sign on to House Bill 682 as a co-author as a result of the visits from members of TCADP.

Lobby Day occurred just two days before the sub-committee hearing for House Bill 682. Thanks to the work of our enthusiastic participants, there can be no doubt that TCADP has made an impact on the minds and hearts of members of the Texas House of Representatives.

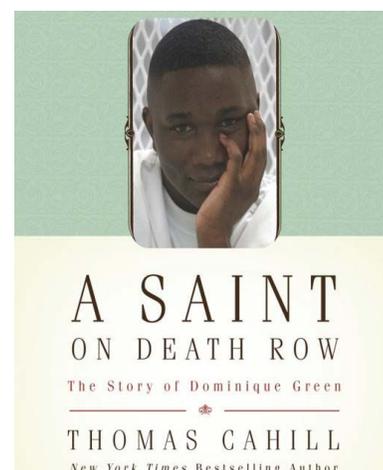
Author Thomas Cahill Publishes New Book

In March, the Riverside Church in New York City hosted an event with Thomas Cahill, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and TCADP founder David Atwood to celebrate the release of Thomas Cahill's new book, *A Saint on Death Row*. You can watch a portion of the event at Riverside Church at

<http://www.booktv.org/program.aspx?ProgramId=10286&SectionName=Politics>.

The following night, Rothko Chapel in Houston hosted Cahill and Atwood for a similar celebration. On both occasions, Mr. Cahill shared how he came to know Dominique Green and how he encountered goodness, peace and enlightenment in him. Following his presentation, Mr. Cahill signed books, and talked with attendees at an informal reception.

In *A Saint on Death Row*, Cahill tells the story of Dominique's extraordinary life, including a Texas death row visit by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and as well as his unjust death. Dominique was executed October 26, 2004, in spite of problems with his legal proceedings and over the protests of the victim's family.



Editor's Note: A Saint on Death Row is a fairly quick read that highlights a lot of the problems with the Texas death penalty. Dominique endured a difficult childhood (at one point living with his brothers in a storage unit in Houston), and received initial poor legal representation, and obvious racist treatment in sentencing. This is a great book to share with friends new to the issue. The book was released by Random House and a portion of the proceeds from sales will benefit TCADP.

TCADP Partners with National Victims' Advocacy Organization

In February, in conjunction with the 2009 Annual Conference, TCADP announced a renewed partnership with Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR). MVFR is a national organization composed of family members of victims of both homicide and state killings who oppose the death penalty in all cases.

Founded in 1976, MVFR works to help the public, the press, and policy makers understand the negative impact that capital punishment has on the families of victims and the condemned. As part of its mission to support state-based efforts, MVFR is working in Texas for the coming year.



TCADP truly looks forward to working with MVFR and other victims' organizations as we stand together to send a strong message about the death penalty to all Texans, and especially our elected officials: "Not in Our Name."

Together, TCADP and MVFR seek to ensure that the perspectives and needs of all victims of violent crime are included in the public dialogue about the necessity and utility of capital punishment. We know from observing and participating in other state campaigns that the victims' community plays a vital role in legislative efforts to end the death penalty. Here in Texas, the voices of victims also are critical to advancing abolition legislation.

Over the next year, TCADP and MVFR plan to work together in the following ways:

- Identifying and supporting murder victims' family members who wish to become more involved in the abolition movement in Texas.
- Involving victims' family members in TCADP's outreach and education programs, particularly in faith communities and with civic groups.
- Collecting signatures on TCADP's Victims' Sign-On Letter, for eventual presentation to the Texas Legislature.
- Furthering our coalition building efforts with local and state organizations.
- Training TCADP chapter leaders on how to reach out to victims in their communities.
- Participating in outreach to the media, in order to raise awareness of victims' perspectives on the death penalty issue.

We invite all of our members to consider becoming involved in this collaborative effort to reach out to victims' families throughout the state in order to demonstrate growing opposition to the death penalty. To learn more about these initiatives, please contact either organization:

Kristin Houlé
TCADP Executive Director
512-441-1808
khoule@tcadp.org
www.tcadp.org

Lorry Post
MVFR Executive Director
877-896-4702
info@mvfr.org
www.mvfr.org

Update on TCADP's Religious Outreach Program

Earlier this year, representatives of TCADP organized several programs aimed at encouraging faith communities to become a part of the legislative advocacy process and to support HB 682:

- Leaders of St. Thomas More Catholic Parish in Austin met in January to brainstorm about the best process for securing parish involvement in advocacy efforts. The group decided that direct action was the best tactic and planned a letter-writing campaign after all the Sunday masses, which would encourage parishioners to send a note or postcard to their legislators and the members of the House Jurisprudence Committee asking for their support in bringing the repeal bill to a hearing.
- The St. Austin Catholic Community in Austin sponsored a two-part advocacy workshop as part of its 2008-2009 Sunday Forum, which is focusing on the issue of poverty. John Niland of the Texas Defender Service spoke the first week on how the poor are affected when they need an attorney in any case, but especially in death penalty cases.

At the second session, Bob and Jean Van Steenburg presented ideas for becoming a successful advocate with the legislature. They provided helpful hints on letter writing and visiting legislative offices and shared ideas of what to expect when lobbying a legislator.

TCADP also helped to organize a screening of the film "At the Death House Door" at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Houston. The event, which took place on February 5, attracted 60-70 participants and featured a follow-up discussion with Reverend Carroll Pickett and TCADP Founder David Atwood. Many thanks to Reverend Bruce Felker for arranging this event!

If you would like to host an event in your faith community, email outreach@tcadp.org for more information.

The buzz word this year when it comes to the death penalty is cost. Countless media outlets have reported that as states confront their mounting budgetary crises, lawmakers have been considering repeal of the death penalty as a cost-cutting measure. As *The Economist* explains, "states considering abolition... have shifted the debate about capital punishment, at least in part, from morality to cost" in recognition of the fact that capital punishment is far more expensive than life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

In Kansas, the costs of capital cases are 70 percent more expensive than comparable non-capital cases, including the costs of incarceration. A 2008 study by the Urban Institute found that each death penalty case cost the state of Maryland \$2 million more than non-death cases, due to extra hearings and appeals, juries and lawyers. In Texas, the cost of an average death penalty case is nearly three times higher than imprisoning someone in maximum security for 40 years, according to a 1992 study by the *Dallas Morning News*. Although it has been 17 years since this study was conducted, we can be certain that carrying out the death penalty remains an expensive government policy.

What makes the death penalty so expensive?

Contrary to popular belief, it is not the appeals that drive up the cost of the death penalty, although

those necessary legal processes certainly drain resources. Rather, it is the cost of the original trial where the greatest discrepancies can be found. Capital murder trials in which the prosecutor seeks a death sentence are much more expensive than capital cases in which the death penalty has been removed as a sentencing option. Here are some of the reasons why:

- Jury selection in death penalty cases takes much longer than in other trials – up to one month. In accordance with the U.S. Supreme Court, all prospective jurors must be questioned about their views on the death penalty to ensure they would not automatically vote for or against death. During that month, two prosecutors, two defense lawyers, one judge, and numerous court staff must be paid. By contrast, in a non-death penalty murder trial, jury selection can be completed in a couple of days.
- Death penalty trials also are longer for a number of reasons, but particularly because of the sentencing phase. During that phase (which does not take place in non-death penalty cases), capital defendants have the option of presenting lots of information – mitigating information – that often would not be presented in a non-death penalty trial. This mitigating information may involve expert testimony, which can be quite expensive.

Of course, the exorbitant costs of the death penalty do not end when the origi-

nal trial concludes. The appeals process for death penalty cases can be lengthy.

The most common claims in those cases are ineffective assistance of counsel and the prosecutor's failure to turn over all evidence to the defense.

These claims often require additional time-consuming – and expensive – hearings.

Who pays for the death penalty in Texas?

The short answer is that we all do, in some form or another, although some of us pay disproportionately more than others, based on the county in which we live.

Each county pays for its own capital trials, which means that counties must make a cost-benefit calculation when deciding whether or not to seek a death sentence in a capital murder case. Oftentimes, smaller or poorer counties simply cannot afford to seek the death penalty.

- Of Texas' 254 counties, 136 have never sent a single offender to death row in the modern death penalty era (1976-present).
- Another 46 counties have sent only one person to death row.

The costs of capital punishment lead to extreme geographic arbitrariness. Those counties with large

budgets can afford to seek the death penalty, while counties with small budgets

"Numerous studies from around the country have repeatedly found that capital punishment is far more expensive than life imprisonment. It is almost certainly the case that the same is true in Texas. Texas counties must pay for more in-depth jury selection, more attorney time, more expert witnesses, and longer sentencing proceedings in order to seek the death penalty. After trial, counties must fund the very complicated and time-consuming state appellate process and the State of Texas is obligated to pay for all federal habeas corpus appeals in capital cases. All told, the counties and the state of Texas end up spending an enormous sum of money in order to seek the death penalty."

- Adam Gershowitz, Associate Professor of Law

must forego it, even in heinous cases. Yet because state tax dollars pay for the federal habeas corpus process, every Texas resident is contributing to the enormous costs of death penalty appeals. Small counties that cannot afford to seek the death penalty themselves actually subsidize the counties that seek it more often. This means that the tax dollars of Texas citizens in counties that cannot afford to try death penalty cases are being used to support the "wealthier" counties that are trying death penalty cases. In this way, all Texans are contributing financially to the use of the death penalty in a relatively small number of counties.

For more information on cost studies, visit the Death Penalty Information Center: <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/costs-death-penalty>.

This article was adapted from testimony given by Adam Gershowitz before the Capital Punishment Subcommittee of the Texas House of Representatives.

Austin Chapter ... has been very active in events at the State Capitol. In January, members participated in the delivery of the 2008 TCADP Annual Report to all of the members of the Texas Legislature. On March 10, members participated in the TCADP Lobby Day (see pages 4 and 5 for more info). The Austin Chapter is planning a fund raising event June 11 to benefit TCADP. We will sponsor a play by a local troupe where TCADP receives the proceeds from the evening. We will also hold a silent auction in conjunction with the play; if you have art or items you wish to donate for the auction please be in touch! The play is titled "Trying" and is the story of Francis Biddle, who served as Attorney General under FDR and as the Chief Judge at the Nuremburg trials. This will be the third such fund raising event by the Austin Chapter. We encourage those who live in the Austin area to mark this date on their calendars and plan to attend the event. Email us at austin@tcadp.org for tickets or to donate to the silent auction.

Corpus Christi Chapter... participated in a very large Social Forum at Texas A&M Corpus Christi in February. The Chapter provided death penalty information and former district attorney, Sam Millsap spoke at the event. Sr. Rosa Ortiz and Jeanne Adams spoke to a CCD class at St Patrick's School and placed death penalty literature in the church. Vigils continue on the day of executions; all are welcome to join us! The Chapter also sends death penalty information to its listserve and stocks the library at the Progressive Center. Jim O'Leary witnesses at the County Courthouse every Monday, handing out literature. Come and join us!

El Paso Chapter... hosted Kristin Houlé, Executive Director of TCADP in March. She gave a public presentation titled "The Death Penalty: A Broken, Costly System." The program opened with a film, which was followed by a discussion led by Ms. Houlé. The film, "Juan Melendez - 6446," is the true story of a man who spent 6,446 days on death row in Florida for a crime he did not commit.

More than 120 people attended this event, which was held on the campus of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). El Pasoans Against the Death Penalty, UTEP's Department of Sociology/Anthropology, and the Criminal Justice Ministry of the El Paso Catholic Diocese sponsored the event.

Houston Chapter... will be participating again in the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Walk this year on May 2. We have set up the TCADP team page at www.nami.org/namiwalks09/HOU/TCADP, where you can register as a walker on our team and set up your own walker page if you like. Last year was a huge success, and everyone who participated was glad they took part in the walk. We had a large number of volunteer walkers (from Houston TCADP and AI 23) marching behind our banner - "Mental Illness is Not a Crime". Not only is it a good cause, but this is a good opportunity to intersect with an organization and its members whose concerns are related to our issue. Come help us meet new people to engage on the death penalty!

Check with your chapter leader for dates and times of meetings!

Chapters also have pages on the website listing vigil and meeting times and locations: www.tcadp.org.

Chapters (C) and Regional Reps (RR)

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Brazos Valley (C) Carole Johnson collegestation@tcadp.org	Rio Grande Valley (C) Sylvia Garza riogrande@tcadp.org
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Ft. Worth (RR) Curt Crum ftworth@tcadp.org NEW!	Waco (RR) Russell Doncouse waco@tcadp.org NEW!

(Please call the state office if you need a contact phone number or check the chapter page on the TCADP website.)



Conference Participants in the Great Hall of the Schmidt-Jones Family Life Center of First United Methodist Church

The TCADP annual conference was held February 21, 2009 in Austin. Nearly 135 youth and adults attended the full-day event whose theme was *Raising Our Voices for Abolition*. The participants represented great geographic diversity including Odessa, Beaumont, The Woodlands, Ft. Worth, Lampasas, the Panhandle, Victoria, Dallas, San Antonio, Waco, College Station and Austin. The main focus of the conference was training TCADP members to be effective with their legislators during the 2009 Legislative session.

Celeste Fitzgerald of New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (NJADP) delivered the keynote address. Celeste shared with us her experiences in moving the state of New Jersey to repeal the death penalty in 2007. She encouraged us in Texas to continue to keep our objective of abolition in mind, to sometimes be satisfied with small steps, to accept the setbacks that will happen, and to always keep looking forward.

During the morning, several quickshops were presented to teach important "how to's" in the areas of reaching out to victims' family members, organizing a fundraiser, planning

a program in faith communities and sponsoring an event.

A plenary session focused on the legislative process for passing a bill, including all the ways a bill can be derailed. Participants also learned how to support HB 682 (repeal of the death penalty) with the goal of securing a hearing in the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee. This was followed by workshops designed to help members become better prepared to speak with their legislators: Legislative Advocacy, How to Answer the Tough Questions and Death Penalty 101. A workshop session was also presented for chapter leaders launching the new Chapter Resource Guide, a tool book of resources for chapters to implement components of the TCADP Strategic Plan.

Exhibitors included national organizations: Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR) and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP); Texas groups: The Texas After Violence Project, Democrats for Life, Methodist Federation for Social Action—Southwest Chapter, the Howard Guidry Support Group and GRACE—the Gulf Region Advocacy Cen-

ter; and authors: Rev. Carroll Pickett, author of *Within these Walls*, and David Atwood, author of *Detour to Death Row*. All provided information on specific issues.

The 2009 Annual Courage, Appreciation and Media Awards were celebrated.

- **El Paso Mayor John Cook** was recognized with the Courage Award for having the strength in his belief in abolition to express it by joining the "Music for Life" Tour, even though his advisors recommended strongly that he not participate in this event as it might hurt his political career.

- **Deborah Michalewicz** received an Appreciation Award for serving as the primary organizer for TCADP's "Music for Life" concert in San Angelo, using her skills to help make this concert an event that brought out over 100 new contacts and members for TCADP.

- **St. John's United Methodist Church** of Lubbock received an Appreciation Award for its efforts in drafting a resolution calling specifically for abolition of the Texas death penalty that was presented to and passed by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

- **Steve James** and **Peter Gilbert** received an Appreciation Award for the film "At the Death House Door", which featured

death house chaplain Rev. Carroll Pickett. This film has served as a new resource for TCADP to use in civic and faith communities for education and to generate new members and supporters.

- **Bob Ray Sanders** received the Media Award for being outspoken against the death penalty in his position as a columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

A final special award was presented to Austin-based singer, songwriter and musician **Sara Hickman** for taking the Music for Life tour to 12 cities in 13 concerts in 2007-2008. Sara's purpose in participating in this tour was to begin the dialogue about the death penalty across the state; she accomplished that by traveling over 5400 miles and attracting over 1200 people to the concerts. The city of Austin declared February 21, 2009, "Sara Hickman Day" and 13th Street (at the corner where the conference was held) was renamed in her honor



"Kids Against the Death Penalty" participated in the conference.

for the day.

The 2009 Conference energized all in attendance. Participants left feeling better equipped to meet with and write to legislators and to spread the message of repeal of the death penalty across the state of Texas.

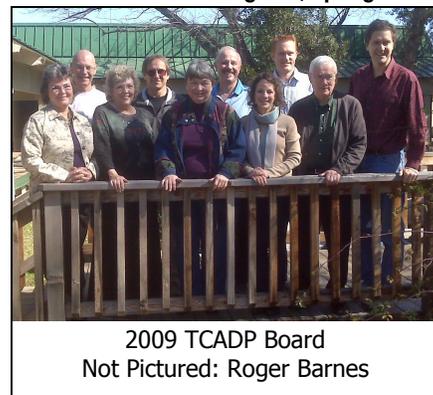
2009 TCADP Board of Directors Elects New Officers

Page 10, Spring 2009

Bob Van Steenburg, Board President (pictured second from left), has been active in social justice issues since 1970 and has been involved with the effort to end the use of capital punishment since 1998. Bob is a retired U.S. Army officer who strongly believes that the state should not be killing its own citizens. His opposition to the death penalty is rooted in his Catholic faith. Bob most recently served TCADP as the Board Vice President.

Linda White, Board Vice President (pictured third from left), is a former adjunct faculty member at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas, in the Department of Psychology and Philosophy. Linda holds a BS in Psychology and an MA in Clinical Psychology from Sam Houston State University and earned her Ph.D. from Texas A&M University. Linda's 26-year old daughter was raped and murdered in 1986. Linda speaks nationwide on her struggles, her healing, and her work for a system of restorative justice. Linda is a volunteer mediator with the Victim Offender Mediation/Dialogue program in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and was appointed in 2003 by Governor Rick Perry to represent victims' issues on the Texas State Council for Adult Offender Supervision. She is a member of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation.

Rich Woodward, Board Secretary (pictured far right), was born and raised in Colorado and went to college in Vermont and graduate school in Wisconsin. He was a member of the Peace Corps in Costa Rica and studied environmental economics at the University of Wisconsin. In 1997 he became a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M. In College Station, he attended two meetings on the death penalty sponsored by a local Congregational Church. Hearing the Reverend Carroll Pickett speak convinced him how wrong the death penalty was.



Member Spotlight...

Russell T. Doncouse

Marlin, TX



How did you come to be against the death penalty?

Gradual process... working as a criminal defense attorney allowed me to see the criminal justice system first hand and the arbitrary nature justice is applied even in the best of circumstances and systems. I have conducted nearly fifty jury trials and negotiated many more. Though I was very successful numerically, having lost [only] three of my trials, I saw how dangerously simple one could find themselves convicted beyond reasonable doubt of a crime they did not commit. My journey, however, was not complete until I came to the conclusion that those guilty of murder were also not deserving of the retribution society metes out for its various reasons, none of which satisfy my soul. If there are doubts, we cannot execute such final judgment.

How did you learn about TCADP? Through Attorney Mary Felps.

What are your expectations in becoming a member of TCADP for yourself?

I expect to learn more about death penalty statutes in Texas, proposed legislation, and where I can provide assistance in my region of Texas. I hope to start a chapter in Waco with the assistance of the organization. (Email Russell at waco@tcadp.org if you can help.)

What do you think is standing in the way of ending the death penalty in Texas?

It seems a contradiction, but I believe it is Christianity, Texas style. This is not an insult by any means. I have begun my own study on this issue and have drawn my own conclusions and hope to influence as many others as I can who share my faith.

What is the most compelling argument for you that the death penalty is wrong?

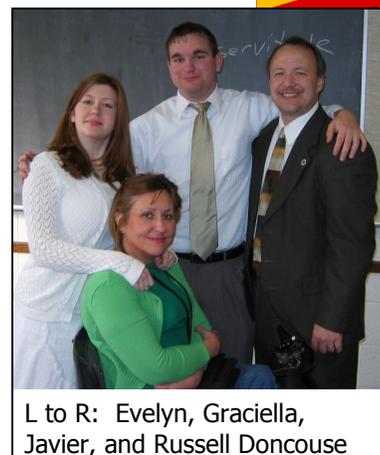
When you add the heartache of the victims families and those of all persons associated with a horrible crime, and accompanying executions, compounding the problem by adding additional family members to the rolls of those who have lost family members to murder, violence, or by organized revenge, such an exorbitant expense to achieve judicial retribution exceeds modern day reason, and in the alternative, exceeds fiscal responsibility. Christ Himself fulfilled the outdated law of Moses when he did away with the ancient notion of an eye for an eye, commanding rather that all must forgive, proving as always with His own example. In His agonizing prayer to God, he begged forgiveness for His executioners who had demanded, ordered, and carried out his execution, while He hung on the cross with one of his last requests before achieving ultimate divinity... Why do we as Christians in Texas believe it a requirement of our faith, a right of our faith, to require a life for a life? There is another way.

What other organizations are you a member of?

Disabled American Veteran (DAV), active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Waco 2nd Ward).

What are your gifts, hobbies, and areas of expertise?

Former criminal defense attorney (retired), taught scripture-related courses for many years, reading, family (father of six, grandfather of five thus far).



Thank You for Your Generous Support



TCADP thanks the following members and donors who have contributed generously from **December 19, 2008 through March 15, 2009**. Your financial assistance is essential for TCADP to continue to GROW its advocacy and education efforts to end the death penalty in Texas.

TCADP urges all members to keep their dues current. The benefits of membership include receiving the quarterly newsletter, receiving action and legislative alerts, and being a key partner in ending the death penalty in Texas.

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Forgive us if we have missed you and please let us know. In some instances we do not have spouses names.

Thank you for your generous support!

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JOIN TODAY!

Donations are tax deductible and support our education efforts in Texas.

I want to be counted as a member of TCADP and as actively working to end the death penalty in Texas.

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_____ I would like to host a program in my faith community, civic organization, or school.

_____ I want to host a new member party in my area with support from TCADP.