



Seizing the Momentum

Summer 2018

Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

Fighting for Life

The three months we spent working to prevent the State of Texas from executing Christopher Anthony Young on July 17, 2018 were among the most intense and proudest of my 20+ years as an anti-death penalty advocate. His execution also was the most devastating because of what it represented: two teenage girls now fatherless; troubled adolescents deprived of his critical mentorship; the pleas of a victim's family ignored; and an utterly meaningless clemency process.



I reached out to Chris' attorneys – David Dow and Jeff Newberry – in March as soon as I learned he had received an execution date. I first worked with Jeff and David on Chris' case from April 2016 to February 2017 as it moved through the federal court system. Those efforts culminated in the release of a statement of support from 550 faith leaders nationwide calling for Chris to receive a new trial, with the aim of persuading the U.S. Supreme Court to consider his case. The Justices declined.

With an execution date looming, the attorneys turned once again to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals to secure a new trial, based on a violation of the Free Exercise Clause of the U.S. Constitution. At the same time, they sought to persuade the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles and Governor Greg Abbott to grant clemency, based on Chris' transformation during the 12 years he had spent on death row and his sincere desire to help young people avoid the mistakes he had made in his life.

The clemency campaign also featured an essential new voice: Mitesh Patel, the son of Hash, the man Chris killed. After witnessing videos of Chris and learning about his life on death row, Mitesh opposed the execution and urged the Board and Governor to show mercy.

Working hand-in-hand with Chris' attorneys and a team of supporters, including professional filmmakers and members of his family, we led strategic actions to mobilize support across the country and in San Antonio, specifically.

While we ultimately were unsuccessful in saving Chris' life, we reached many people with his story of redemption and Mitesh's story of forgiveness. Nearly 60,000 people signed the petition we created through change.org, and an astonishing 970,000 have watched a powerful video featuring Mitesh.

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Scheduled Executions in 2018

September 12: Ruben Gutierrez

September 26: Troy Clark

September 27: Daniel Acker

October 10: Juan Segundo

October 24: Kwame Rockwell

November 7: Emanuel Kemp

December 4: Joseph Garcia

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North Texas Roundup

Greetings from North Texas! The temperatures may be spiking, but that certainly hasn't slowed TCADP's work in the DFW Metroplex. Here are just a few of the highlights from the past few months:

In April, investigative journalist Alison Flowers spoke to TCADP supporters in Fort Worth about her book *Exoneree Diaries*, which details the experiences of four people wrongfully convicted by the justice system. Alison's keen observation and analysis cast light on a system that too often fails minorities and the poor. Although her investigative work is done largely in the Chicago area, Alison, a Texas native, drew insightful connections to the Texas legal system, emphasizing the high cost (in both human suffering and taxpayer dollars) of wrongfully convicting the innocent.

In preparation for the 2018 election, TCADP hosted Democratic candidate for Tarrant County District Attorney, Albert Roberts, in May for a powerful Q&A session that covered a wide range of criminal justice issues, including the death penalty. Mr. Roberts discussed his vision for the District Attorney's office, what his past experience working for the Dallas District Attorney has taught him, the challenges of jury selection, and the importance of victims' advocates in helping people navigate the system. On September 13, TCADP will host Tarrant County's incumbent District Attorney, Republican Sharen Wilson, at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Fort Worth at 6:00 PM.

I'm happy to report that TCADP's presence at the Texas Democratic Convention in Fort Worth was a great success! Delegates who visited our booth had the opportunity to tell us why they opposed the death penalty and place a pin in our interactive map of Texas to show us where they live. I'm proud to say that North Texas was well represented, but we had supporters from every corner of the state, from Lubbock to Hidalgo and from El Paso to Orange County! Delegates also learned about Christopher Young's clemency petition and other ways they can directly support our work to reduce executions across the state. Thanks to all of our amazing volunteers for giving their time and connecting with supporters old and new!

TCADP's outreach to faith communities continues to be one of our great strengths in North Texas. Over the past few months I've connected with new supporters at the North Texas Catholic Men's Conference, joined the United Methodist Board of Church & Society for their annual luncheon, and networked at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's General Assembly in Dallas. I come away from each interaction reminded of real potential for a more restorative vision of justice in Texas.

We're working to provide even more opportunities for supporters to engage decision-makers and their communities in the second half of 2018! You are the heart of TCADP's activism. Together, we'll continue to seize the momentum!

- *Jim Webner*



Jim (right) with volunteer Larry James, CEO of CitySquare



Our "map of opposition"



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Seizing the Momentum

Seizing the Momentum is published quarterly by TCADP and distributed to members and allies. All issues are available online, as well as twice a year in print.

Issue #61, Summer 2018: <http://tcadp.org/get-informed/newsletter-archives/>

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TCADP would like to thank everyone who helped to staff our exhibitor's booth at the Texas Democratic Convention: Les Breeding; Robert Flowers; Lauralee Harris; Larry James; Linda Price; Jennifer Stephens; and Karla Williams.



Texas Death Penalty Developments (As of August 1, 2018)

Executions: 8 out of 14 nationwide

Clemency granted: 1

Stays granted: 1

States that have carried out executions this year:
5 (Texas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Ohio)

Individuals currently on death row in Texas: 225

Jury rejections: 2 (Atascosa and Bell Counties)

New death sentences: 3 (Hardin, Tom Green, and Willacy Counties)

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

We've moved!! Our new mailing address is

**TCADP
PO Box 82212
Austin, TX 78708**

We owe a debt of gratitude to the following individuals who helped with the office move... in July (not advisable!):

Sandra Bradley
Fidel Cuellar
Annie Hamdani
Kim Harrison



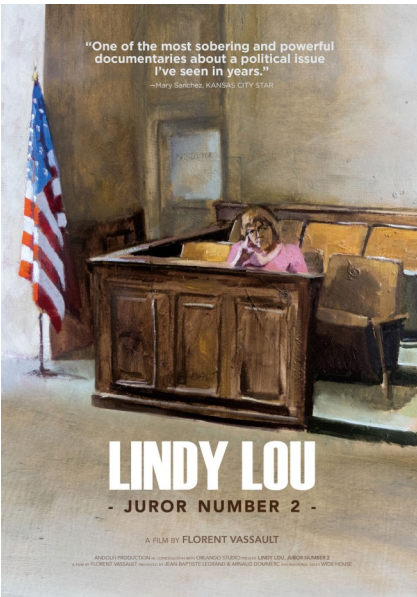
**Connect with TCADP
on Facebook!**

View photos from our events, connect with more than 5,000 other supporters, and learn about important death penalty developments. "Like" us today!



Film Review of “Lindy Lou, Juror Number 2”

“Lindy Lou, Juror Number 2” is a riveting documentary about Lindy Wells, who, along with her fellow jurors, handed down a death sentence to Bobby Wilcher, a Mississippi man they convicted of a double homicide in the 1990s. For Lindy Lou, a planned week off to teach Vacation Bible School turns into a life-changing experience when she is called to jury duty. For more than 20 years, Lindy has lived with guilt and remorse for voting for a death sentence: “I didn’t do what my heart told me to do and vote for a life sentence.” The documentary follows her quest to reach out to her fellow jurors to talk about the trial and understand if they share similar feelings and questions.



Lindy shares her struggles as she drives throughout the Mississippi delta to visit fellow jurors. She gets a mixed reaction from her visits, ranging from one juror who seems to have forgotten most of the trial to an alternate who changed her mind about the death penalty after her service and is now opposed to its use. Throughout the film, Lindy makes no judgements but listens with a compassion and openness that is compelling and heartbreaking at the same time. As she says to one juror, “I’m not here to change your mind.” Most of the jurors still feel the effects of serving on the jury. It also is interesting to see the effect on their family members, especially the family of Lindy Lou.

Many documentaries have looked at the impact of the death penalty on victims’ families or on death row inmates and their families. “Lindy Lou, Juror Number 2” gives a unique perspective on the impact on everyday citizens who are called upon to exercise their civic duties by serving on a jury in the most serious of matters, deciding the fate on whether an individual lives or dies. This documentary, directed by French director Florent Vassault, is a worthwhile watch for anyone who wants to understand the impact of the death penalty.

Lindy Lou, Juror Number 2 is currently available for streaming at PBS.org – P.O.V. (Point of View) through August 18.

- DJ Compton

If you would like to organize or host a screening of “Lindy Lou” this fall, please contact Kristin at khoule@tcadp.org or Jim at jwebner@tcadp.org.

Fighting for Life, continued from page 1

We also struck a major blow against the death penalty by raising important questions about racial bias, transparency, and the voice of victims in the clemency process in Texas.

Chris’ last words to us – “this fight don’t stop with me” – inspire me to work even harder to rid our state of capital punishment.

I also am inspired by the amazing individuals and organizations who supported our campaign, from our initial efforts in 2017 to mobilize faith leaders to support Chris’ quest for a new trial to the last agonizing hours before he was put to death. Thanks to everyone who played a role in these efforts, and to Jeff and David for enlisting TCADP in the fight for life.

- Kristin Houlé

What a clemency campaign looks like:

- 60,000 petition signatures (= 1,500 sheets of paper, double-sided)
- 906,000 video views
- 53,000 Twitter impressions
- 550+ faith leaders mobilized
- Hundreds of hours of staff time over the last two years
- Two trips to San Antonio
- Dozens of articles
- Countless calls and emails to the Board of Pardons and Paroles and Governor



We solicited reactions from TCADP members around the state in response to the Vatican’s announcement on August 2 that Pope Francis has revised the church’s official stance on capital punishment:

- “This revision to the Catechism maintains the Catholic Church's tradition of understanding the faith through the centuries of Sacred Tradition and Magisterial teaching, much like the declaration in August 1997 when this version of the Catechism was announced. Clarifying this statement affirms that every person has God-given dignity.”
- **Jeremy Stephens, Lewisville**
- “I am happy with Pope Francis’ decision to update church doctrine against the death penalty. I work in criminal justice ministry, and the facility where they hold the men who are on death row falls within the boundaries of our diocese. We hold a prayer vigil for every person who is scheduled for execution by the State. We pray for a stay of execution, as well as for the family of the victim and the person executed. We ask for God’s mercy for the victim and the person executed. My heart is glad, as a murder victim family member, to see that the church is taking this stance against the death penalty in all cases.” **Chris Castillo, Coordinator of Chaplain Volunteers for the Diocese of Beaumont**
- “The news that the Pope has revised the Catholic Catechism to state that The Catholic Church now works with determination for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide is HUGE. It reinforces several concepts that we all know in our hearts to be true and valid. First & second: that God created life; therefore, He is the only one who has the right to take it away (our remedy is to keep those confined who threaten our communities). Third, that Jesus Christ died on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven through repentance. There are two consequences of this latter fact: a) Eye-for-an-eye punishments, although mentioned in the Old Testament, are no longer supported in the New Testament, and b) We do not have the right to deprive any individual of the possibility of repentance by shortening a lifespan which may have resulted in repentance at some point prior to a natural death. For all these reasons this news is BIG, and an occasion for great joy!” - **Vincent Page, Pattison**
- “I felt a surge of hope and joy when I read Pope Francis's statement about the death penalty. My belief in abolition seems so much more realistic now.” - **Mardi Baron, San Antonio**
- “The Pope's announcement last week didn't surprise me. He's made many comments either in speeches or homilies over the years saying, ‘Look, God made man in His image - every life is sacred.’ He's spoken often on the healing that comes through finding mercy and forgiveness, especially where prisoners are concerned. I am enthused and encouraged by the announcement of change, or rather, a definitive stance on the death penalty in Catholic Church Doctrine and our belief that there are no exceptions or circumstances under which a man or woman should be executed. I think it will take time for any change in what the church does to be noticeable. It'll be taught in CCE classes to the young ones and it will be discussed in adult faith formation classes. Combined with how there are fewer executions - I'm simply hopeful abolishment happens in my lifetime.”
- **Karla Williams, TCADP Board Member**
- “I was thrilled when I heard the news that Pope Francis had revised CCC 2267, closing the loophole for the support of capital punishment! While there has been some controversy, this revision is a call for Catholics to fully embrace Church teaching on the dignity of every human person.” - **Kay Leonard, McKinney**

“Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. ...Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that ‘the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person’,^[1] and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.”

- **New revision of number 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the death penalty**



Thank you for your generous support!

TCADP would like to thank the following organizations and individuals who contributed between April 17 and July 31, 2018. 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*
 Elizabeth Aguirre*
 Janice Ahmad*
 Anthony and Lynn Akins*
 Vanessa Akins*
 Trista Allen*
 David Atwood*
 Mardi Baron*
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 Mike and Gloria Bearce
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 John Reiser*
 Dr. Mike Renquist and Rev. Dr. Georjean Blanton*
 Amy Schaffner*
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 Tina Trimble
 Jared Tyler*
 Bob and Jean Van Steenburg*
 Sigrid Walsh*
 James Webner and Jay Fuller*
 Linda White*
 Karla Williams*
 Richard Woodward*
 Rev. John Yeaman*

 Death Penalty Awareness Society,
 Thurgood Marshall School of Law
 Dominican Sisters of
 Houston
 Lifespark (Switzerland)
 St. John's United Methodist Church
 (Austin)

* Indicates Partners for Justice or Sustaining Members (TCADP's recurring giving programs); visit www.tcadp.org/donate for details.