



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

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**TCADP Annual Conference to offer views from the front lines of the criminal justice system**

*Statewide gathering will honor victim survivors, local defense attorney, and filmmaker, among others*

**(Austin, Texas)** — Advocates from across Texas will gather this Saturday, February 16, 2019 at St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin for the 21<sup>st</sup> annual conference of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP). This event, *Uniting for Justice*, will feature workshops, a keynote address, and a panel discussion offering views from the front lines of the criminal justice system. The Honorable Elsa Alcala, the Honorable Mike Lynch, and State Representative Joe Moody will serve as panelists; Keri Blakinger of the *Houston Chronicle* will moderate the discussion.

Jason Baldwin will provide the keynote address. Baldwin was released from prison on August 19, 2011 after serving more than 18 years for crimes he did not commit. Known collectively as the "West Memphis 3," Baldwin and his co-defendants, Jessie Misskelley, Jr. and Damien Echols, were wrongfully convicted of murdering three 8-year old boys in West Memphis, Arkansas. The factors surrounding their wrongful conviction led to a worldwide effort to free the three and expose the injustice of the Arkansas legal system.

During the conference, TCADP will honor State Representative Donna Howard for co-authoring legislation to repeal the death penalty in the 85th Texas Legislature. Howard represents House District 48 in Austin.

Death penalty repeal legislation has been filed in the 86th Texas Legislature: HB 246 by State Representative Jessica Farrar (D-Houston) and SB 294 by State Senator Eddie Lucio (D-Brownsville).

TCADP will present Courage Awards to two individuals whose pleas for mercy last year inspired hundreds of thousands of people in Texas and around the country. The recipients are:

- Mitesh Patel, who sought to stop the execution of Christopher Young, the man who killed his father, Hasmukh "Hash" Patel in San Antonio in 2004; Young was put to death on July 17, 2018; and
- Kent Whitaker, who worked tirelessly to secure clemency for his son, Thomas "Bart" Whitaker; Whitaker received a rare commutation from Governor Greg Abbott on February 22, 2018.

The 2019 Founder's Award will be presented to Austin-based defense attorney Keith Hampton, in recognition of the decades of zealous legal representation he has provided to individuals on death row in Texas and, particularly, his successful efforts to secure clemency for Kenneth Foster and Thomas "Bart" Whitaker.

The TCADP 2019 Annual Conference will take place at St. David's Episcopal Church, 301 E. 8<sup>th</sup> St., Austin, Texas 78701, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The keynote address and awards ceremony will take place from 12:30 to 2:30 PM. All are welcome.

For detailed information about the panelists, keynote speaker, and award recipients, visit <http://tcadp.org/what-we-do/annual-conference/>.

TCADP is a statewide, grassroots advocacy organization based in Austin.

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