



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

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**TCADP to mark 25th anniversary of annual statewide conference**

*Death row exoneree Anthony Graves to deliver keynote address; organization to honor several stakeholders and leaders for raising awareness of death penalty flaws*

**(Austin, Texas)** — Advocates from across Texas will gather for the 25<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP) this Saturday, February 25, 2023, at St. David's Episcopal Church in downtown Austin. This event, titled *25 Years of Igniting Change*, will feature workshops, a keynote address by Anthony Graves, and a panel discussion with four capital defense attorneys whose clients have faced execution dates.

Keynote speaker **Anthony Graves** spent 18 and a half years in prison, including more than 12 years on Texas's death row, as an innocent man. He was freed and exonerated on October 27, 2010. Today, Graves brings his unique perspective to the challenge of reforming the criminal justice system. As Director of Community Outreach for the Harris County Public Defender's Office, Graves has implemented a project to mentor defendants and their family members through the criminal legal system, and he is fulfilling his dream of creating a criminal justice system that treats people fairly, strives for equality, and respects the humanity of the guilty and innocent alike.

During the conference, TCADP will present the 2023 Courage Award to **Mark Gonzalez**, who serves as the District Attorney (DA) of Nueces County. Last year, DA Gonzalez publicly declared his ethical opposition to the death penalty and sought to withdraw the execution date that was set for John Ramirez without his knowledge. While his efforts to stop the execution were unsuccessful, we commend DA Gonzalez for using his discretion to seek justice in Nueces County.

TCADP will present Appreciation Awards to three leaders who have contributed to efforts to stop executions:

- **Dr. Bill Bush, Professor of History at Texas A&M University-San Antonio.** Dr. Bush's research includes an ongoing historical study of youthful capital offenders. He has provided support for the clemency campaigns of two individuals who faced execution by the State of Texas for crimes committed when they were 18 years old.
- **Jesse Rincones, J.D., Executive Director of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas.** Pastor Rincones played an instrumental role in amplifying the voices of Texas faith leaders as part of the campaign to stop the execution of Melissa Lucio in April 2022.

- **Dr. Rachel Jennings, Professor of English at San Antonio College.** A constant presence at vigils on the days of executions in Texas, even during the pandemic, Rachel is a dedicated participant in the activities of TCADP both virtually and locally in San Antonio.

Media Awards will be presented to **Brant Bingamon**, who writes the “Death Watch” column for the *Austin Chronicle*, and **Keri Blakinger**, a journalist and the author of *Corrections in Ink*, a memoir tracing her path from figure skating to heroin addiction to prison and, finally, to life as an investigative reporter covering mass incarceration.

Workshop sessions during the conference include the following:

- Conservatives and Capital Punishment: How Republicans Are Joining the Fight Against the Death Penalty
- Mental Illness and the Death Penalty: Competency to Be Executed
- The Evolution of the “Modern” Era of the Death Penalty
- Death Penalty Decision Makers
- Surviving Death Row
- The Power of Advocacy

The TCADP 2023 Annual Conference will take place at St. David’s Episcopal Church (301 E. 8th St., Austin, TX 78701) from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturday, February 25, 2023. The keynote address and awards ceremony will take place from 12:30 to 2:30 PM.

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

The **Texas Coalition of Abolish the Death Penalty** is the only statewide grassroots advocacy organization dedicated solely to ending the death penalty in Texas. Led by staff in Austin and Dallas and a statewide Board of Directors, TCADP has more than 13,000 supporters and 37 organizational affiliates. TCADP collaborates with local, state, and national partners to reduce use of the death penalty and advocate for change at the county and state level.

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