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# Texas Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty

A Project of TCADP

Welcome to Texas CCATDP's October 2023 newsletter!

## SCHEDULED EXECUTIONS

Four men are **scheduled to be executed** in the state of Texas this fall — two of whom are scheduled for execution in October. The first of these executions is scheduled for Tuesday, October 10, 2023, when **Jedidiah Murphy** is set to be put to death for Bertie Cunningham's 2000 murder in Dallas. October 10 is also observed annually as World Day Against the Death Penalty. **Will Speer** is scheduled to be executed on October 26 for the 1997 murder of Gary Dickerson in prison.

## TAKE ACTION

**Support Clemency for Jedidiah Murphy** The State of Texas is scheduled to execute Jedidiah Murphy on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, a date recognized globally as World Day Against the Death Penalty. Murphy was convicted and sentenced to death in 2001 by a Dallas County jury for kidnapping and killing 79-year-old Bertie Cunningham.

Murphy immediately accepted responsibility for his crime and expressed profound remorse for the irreplaceable loss and pain his actions have caused. In the 23 years he has spent on death row, he has experienced a genuine spiritual and personal transformation grounded in his Jewish faith. Now, fueled by remorse for his crime, love for his family, a desire to help others, and his religious devotion, he has become a role model to others.

Please [email the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles](#) and urge them to recommend clemency for Murphy (you must include his TDCJ #999392 and DOB 09/01/1975 in your appeals). Additionally, [please share your concerns](#) with Governor Greg Abbott. You can find a sample email message for the Board from our partners at TCADP, as well as additional information about Murphy [here](#). Please contact the Board before Friday, October 6, 2023.

**Save Will Speer** As the first faith-based coordinator on Texas death row, Will Speer carries a message of healing, redemption, and love to people incarcerated in Texas prisons. Now, Texas is planning to execute him on Thursday, October 26, 2023.

Through his faith, Will has found redemption and healing and taken responsibility for the harms of his past: he is on death row because he killed another incarcerated person over two decades ago. Now, he seeks to make the world a better place by ministering to other incarcerated people and preaching to thousands over the prison radio, carrying a life-giving message of faith, healing, and love.

Please sign the petition urging the [Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles](#) to spare his life. You can learn more about Will's story [here](#). Please share Will's story and the petition with your family and friends and on your social media platforms with the hashtag #SaveWillSpeer.

## WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

Tuesday, October 10 is recognized globally as World Day Against the Death Penalty. Vigils, panels, and other events will be held throughout the day in cities across Texas including Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, El Paso, and more.

Texas CCATDP is proud to join [TCADP](#) at their **World Day Against the Death Penalty Interfaith Vigil** on Tuesday, October 10 at 12:00 PM in front of the Texas State Capitol in Austin. Texas CCATDP Director Nan Tolson will deliver remarks alongside other anti-death penalty advocates and faith leaders from the Austin area.

For a full list of World Day Against the Death Penalty events in Texas, [click here](#).

## TEXAS CCATDP SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

This past Spring, Texas CCATDP circulated an informal survey about the death penalty among Texans who self-identified as conservative, Republican, Libertarian, right of center, or anything in between. The results were shocking and signal a major change among the right when it comes to capital punishment.

- Over **three quarters** of respondents indicated they would support **ending** the death penalty.
- Respondents who do not support the death penalty pointed to a variety of reasons why, including **pro-life** values, the **risk** of wrongful execution, **religious** beliefs, and more.
- Over half of respondents had a generally unfavorable view of the death penalty, including **60.7% who oppose** the death penalty in all situations.
- Only 17.8% support the death penalty for rare circumstances and **only 11.2%** of respondents fully supported the death penalty when asked about their general opinion of the practice.
- Over 60% of respondents indicated an **interest in joining a coalition** of conservatives committed to ending the death penalty.

If you are one of these survey respondents, we thank you for your input and support!

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

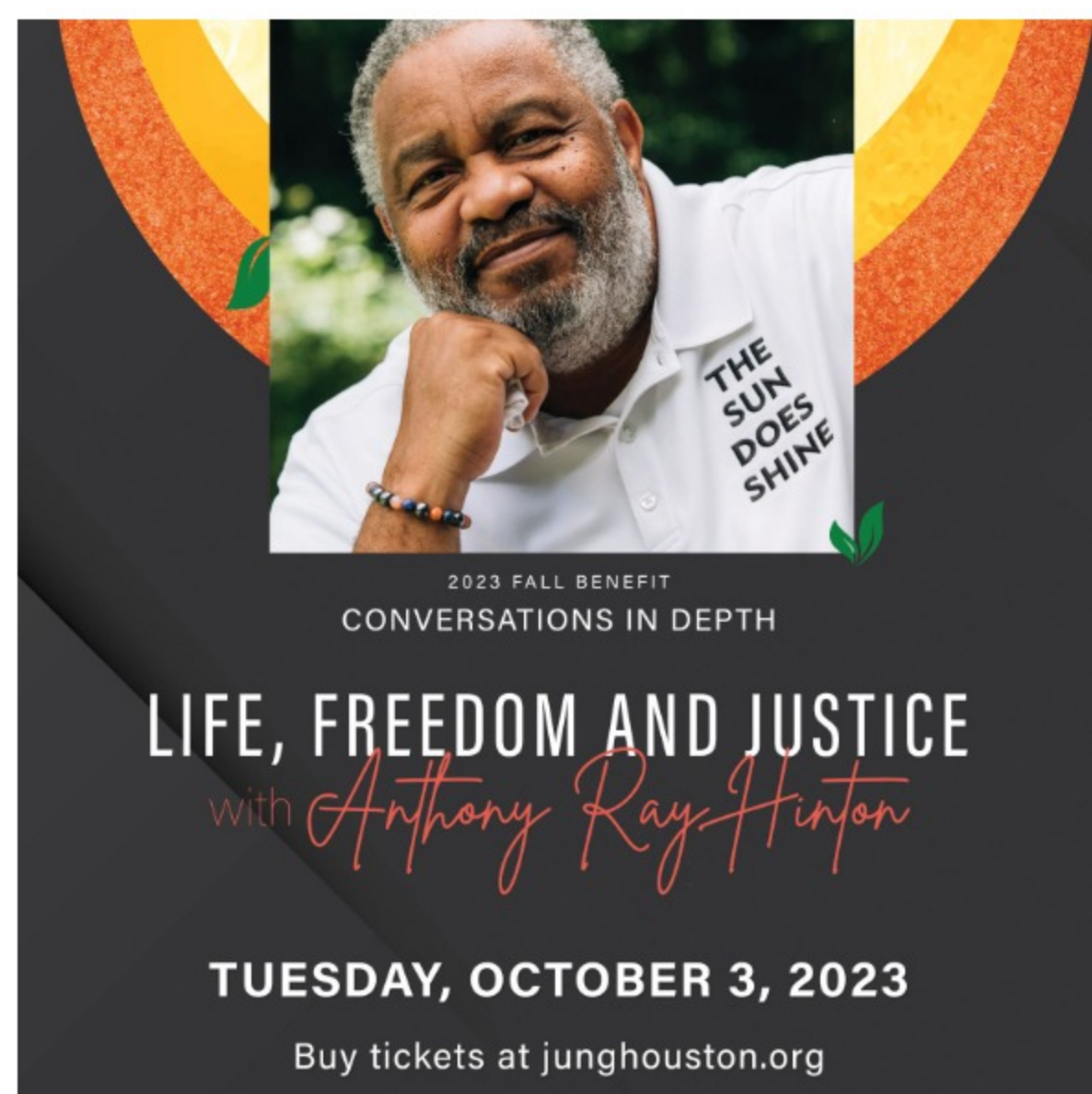
**Scott Panetti** On September 28, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas found that Scott Panetti is not competent for execution. Panetti has a 40-year documented history of severe mental illness, which includes profound distortions in his perception of reality, disorganized thinking and speech, paranoid and grandiose delusions, and audio hallucinations. More information about his case can be found [here](#).

**Conservative Panel** In September, Texas CCATDP Director Nan Tolson spoke on a panel about the role conservatives play in ending the death penalty. Joined by other CCATDP affiliate leaders, the panel shared with state death penalty leaders about the importance of conservative messaging and shared values. Thank you to the 8th Amendment Project for hosting this panel.

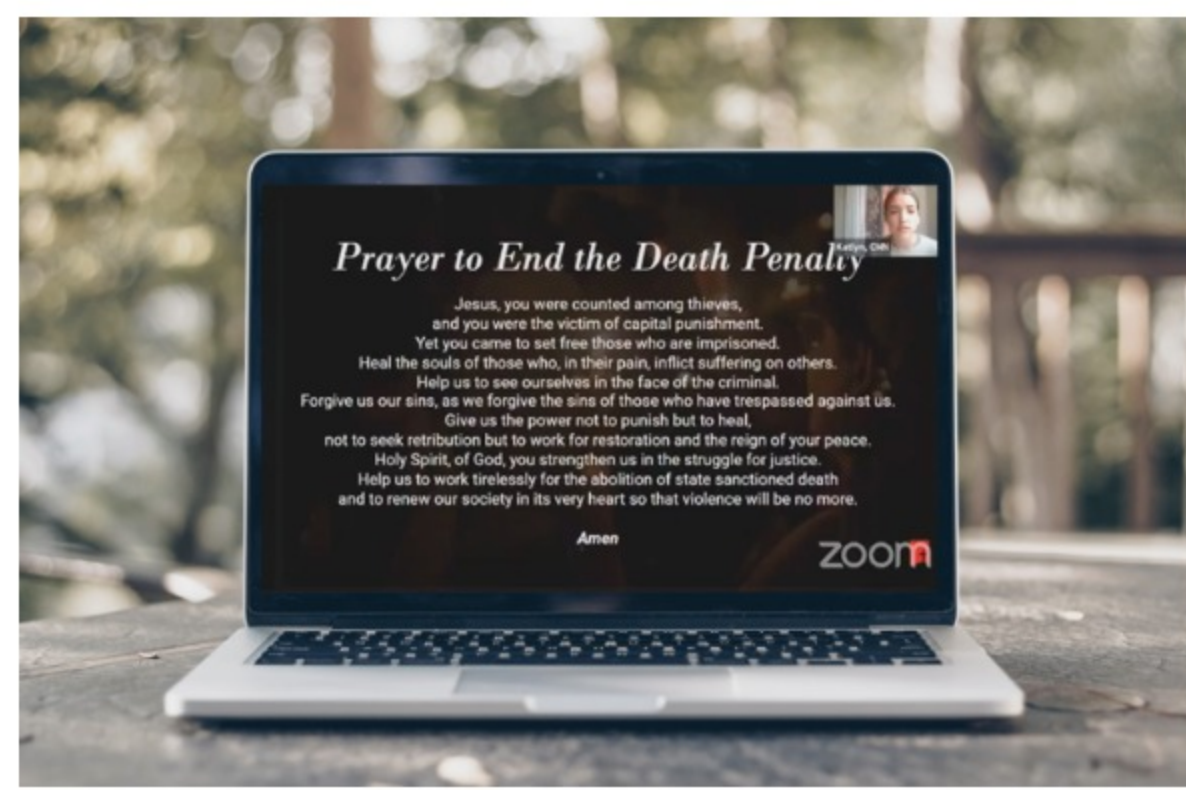
**Liberty Spaces "Is the Death Penalty Justice or Revenge?"** Texas CCATDP recently took part in a Twitter (X) Space conversation on the death penalty. You can listen to the conversation [here](#).

If you are part of a group who might be interested in hosting a conversation, presentation, or other event about conservatives and the death penalty, please contact us at [ConservativesConcernedTexas@gmail.com](mailto:ConservativesConcernedTexas@gmail.com).

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Tues, Oct. 3: "The Sun Does Shine: Anthony Ray Hinton on Life, Freedom, and Justice" in Houston.** Hinton will share his extraordinary story of faith, compassion, and the fortitude of the human spirit as someone who lived on Alabama's death row for 30 years as an innocent man. Co-sponsored by the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. Event benefits the Jung Center in Houston. 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM CT. Houston. [Purchase tickets here](#).



**Friday, Oct. 6: "First Friday Virtual Prayer Vigil"** On the first Friday of each month, Catholic Mobilizing Network holds a Virtual Prayer Vigil to lament upcoming executions and bear witness to the inviolable dignity of all human life. This includes time for guided prayer, petitions, Scripture reflections, and contemplative silence. 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM CT. Virtual. [RSVP here](#).



**Tuesday, Oct. 10: "National Christian Prayer Call to End the Death Penalty"** Join EJUSA's Evangelical Network, CCATDP, Live Free, Faith Leaders of Color Coalition, and Justice for Julius on World Day Against the Death Penalty to spend time praying with other Christians about the state and federal death penalty. This will be a space of power, peace, and prayer. 5:30 to 6:30 PM CT. Virtual. [RSVP here](#).



**Saturday, Oct. 21 and Wednesday, Oct. 25: "The Met: Live in HD 'Dead Man Walking' Opera"** Cinemark and Regal movie theaters throughout the United States will host a screening of The Metropolitan Opera's live performance of "Dead Man Walking" on Saturday, October 21, 2023 and an encore presentation on Wednesday, October 25, 2023. Based on Sister Helen Prejean's memoir about her fight for the soul of a condemned murderer, Dead Man Walking matches the high drama of its subject with Heggie's beautiful and poignant music and a brilliant libretto by Tony and Emmy Award-winner Terrence McNally. To find a participating theatre near you and purchase tickets, [click here](#).



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