Nicole Casarez Recognized as Champion of Justice

The University of St. Thomas issued the following news release:

The Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP) will recognize Nicole Casarez, University of St. Thomas professor of communication, for her tireless efforts to exonerate former death row inmate Anthony Graves. A reception, "Seizing the Momentum: Honoring Houston's Champions of Justice," honoring Casarez, Rep. Jessica Farrar and David Dow, will be held at 7 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 15 at the Station Museum of Contemporary Art, 1502 Alabama Street.

Proceeds from the event will benefit TCADP's ongoing advocacy efforts and educational outreach to citizens to raise awareness about the flaws and failures of the death penalty.

TCADP and the Station are hosting this event to thank individual Houstonians whose efforts and victories have enriched the conversation with the public about the death penalty.

Nicole Casarez is an attorney and a professor at St. Thomas, where she teaches journalism, media law, public relations and media ethics. On October 27, 2010, Anthony Graves walked out of the Burleson County Jail after spending 18 years in prison - including 12 years on death row - for a crime he did not commit. Prosecutors dropped all charges against Graves and declared him innocent after conducting their own investigation of the case. Nicole and her students played a pivotal role in the exoneration of Anthony Graves, and their investigation has attracted significant statewide and national attention.

Rep. Jessica Farrar (District 148) has served nine terms as State Representative of District 148 in Houston. First elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1994 at the age of 27, she is the longest-serving Hispanic from Houston in the Texas House of Representatives. Rep. Farrar works extensively on issues related to the environment, women's health, children's healthcare, education, taxes, homeowner rights, homeland and border security, domestic violence, sexual assault, reproductive rights, insurance coverage, transportation, discrimination, and criminal and juvenile justice. Since 2007, she has been the lead sponsor of legislation calling for the repeal of the death penalty in Texas.

**David Dow is a University Distinguished Professor at the University of Houston Law Center, where he joined the faculty in 1988.** Professor Dow is also the founder of the Texas Innocence Network and the Litigation Director at the Texas Defender Service. Often working with UH Law Center students, he has represented more than one hundred death row inmates in their state and federal appeals. In addition, he is the author of Executed on a Technicality: Lethal Injustice on America's Death Row (2005) and The Autobiography of an Execution (2010), which received first place in the non-fiction category for Barnes & Noble's 2010 Discover Great New Writers Awards. His work appears often in the New York Times and the Washington Post and on NPR.

The Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty is a grassroots membership organization comprised of individuals and groups who work to end the death penalty in all cases, everywhere. TCADP is an inclusive organization composed of human rights activists; crime victims and their families; persons
working within the criminal justice system; persons opposed to capital punishment on religious and moral grounds; death row prisoners and their families; and other concerned citizens opposed to capital punishment.

Individual tickets for the reception are $50 and can be purchased online or by check, made payable to TCADP and mailed to 2709 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin, TX 78704 (please note "Champions of Justice" in the memo line).