

texas tea newsletter

A home-brewed publisher devoted to exposing the secrets of the Texas Civil Commitment Center in Littlefield, Texas.



in this issue

What's Brewing This Month?

This month's tea includes an insert sharing details of Jeff Blackburn's life, a man who devoted his time to freeing the wrongfully convicted, and Josh Duggar's recent prison sentence.

Want to Share Your Story?

Send any crucial documentation you want to share with us to texasteanewsletter@gmail.com or to P.O. Box 3226, San Marcos, Texas 78666 to allow us to enact change within the Texas Civil Commitment Center.

Greetings readers! Welcome to the April Issue of the Texas Tea Newsletter.

let's spill the tea

By the Editor

These past couple of months have been a whirlwind of events for our friends over at F.A.C.T.S. (Families Against Committing Texans Standup). A couple of wives attended the latest Texas Civil Commitment Office board meeting in Austin on February 16. (These meetings are held every quarter and are open to the public.) They both gave statements, and as usual, Marsha McLane and her minions just stared blankly. No answers were given to any of their concerns. Moving right along!

On February 21, there were over 10 family members and ex-employees of the Texas Civil Commitment Center that went before the Senate Finance Committee. They were strongly protesting the future funding of TCCO and its failing program. Almost all of them have never done anything like this and they did amazing! The very next week, several of them showed up again on April 28 to testify before the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee. To make things a little more interesting, Marsha McLane herself was sitting in the audience listening to every word. Of course, she was.

During the month of March, F.A.C.T.S. member Lonnell Hanks-Welsh visited with several Texas Representatives. A few days later, the Capitol was buzzing as F.A.C.T.S. Creator Jennifer Williams, Co-Founder Mandi Brady visited with several of State Representatives. There were 7 total meetings held with the Representatives where tons of vital information was shared. Their voices were heard!

As of late, we at TTN have received a couple of letters inquiring about our identity. It is so very important that we keep who we are confidential. The goal of this newsletter has always been to benefit the ones in civil commitment. With all the limitations that TCCO puts on incoming mail, it is best that we remain unknown. But we will ask you this...does it really matter who we are? Will it change our audience's impression if they know our identities? All that matters is that we fight, try, and care. We put in more time and effort than most people surrounding this cause. We receive letters filled with criticism and accusations and yet we show up again each month serving hot tea.

Jeff Blackburn Freed the Wrongfully Convicted and Changed Criminal Justice in Texas

By **Laura Rice** with **Texas Standard** | February 13, 2023



Attorney Jeff Blackburn was probably best known for his work exposing the bad police work behind the 1999 Tulia drug bust. The drug sting in the small Panhandle town resulted in the arrests of close to 50 people – mostly Black. Blackburn took up the case and helped it garner national attention. In 2003, the convicts won release. Many received official pardons from Gov. Rick Perry.

In 2006, Blackburn co-founded the Innocence Project of Texas, which to date has freed 27 people who were found to be wrongfully convicted.

Blackburn died on Feb. 7. He was 65.

Dallas-based criminal defense attorney Gary Udashen is a founding board member of the Innocence Project of Texas and tells Texas Standard Blackburn leaves an important legacy. Listen to the story above or read the transcript below.

This transcript has been edited lightly for clarity:

Texas Standard: Can you say a little bit more about the big picture of Jeff Blackburn's work? How did he change criminal justice in Texas?

Gary Udashen: Well, of course, Jeff well known for his work on the Tulia case – exposing the false drug arrests out in Tulia, a small community in West Texas. But the big picture is, as he was one of the founders of the Innocence Project of Texas and the work he did through the Innocence

Project of Texas, he has had a significant impact on the criminal justice system in Texas. And Texas is a better place because of the work Jeff has done and did for us all.

Who was Tim Cole and what did that case mean to Jeff?

So Tim Cole was a Texas Tech student who was falsely accused and convicted of a series of rapes, one in particular in Lubbock when he was a Tech student. And Jeff took that case on, after Tim Cole had actually died, working with Tim's family and achieved a posthumous pardon of Tim based upon DNA proving Tim's innocence. And Jeff was able to work this through the system and convince Gov. Perry to grant a posthumous pardon, which I believe may have been the first, or certainly one of the first, posthumous pardons of this kind in the entire country.

Can you say a little bit more about the person, Jeff Blackburn? What was he like?

He was a larger-than-life personality. And although he was outspoken and he was in-your-face and he said what he thought and he was passionate about the things that he was working on, everybody still liked him. He would make very strong statements about the criminal justice system. And he was very critical of some of the main players in the criminal justice system, and it would upset them.

But nobody ever said, "I don't like Jeff Blackburn" because he had the type of personality that brought people in, that brought people together. And no matter how strong his statements and how strong his feelings were about what he was working on, he was somebody that everybody liked and everybody admired for the work and the passion that he brought to the work. But the Tulia case is what really brought him into the world of innocence work and criminal justice reform. And so I think for about the last 20 years of his life, this was what his life was about.

The Tulia case was, as you say, probably his most high-profile case. What do you think he would want people to take away from what he

found there?

Well, what Jeff would say and what he always said is "the system is broken." And what Jeff, I'm sure, would tell you today if you were talking to him is what happened to these poor people in Tulia, who were wrongfully set up and wrongfully convicted, happens to people every day all over the country. And Jeff would make sure everybody knew that Tulia was not an isolated incident, that people are wrongfully convicted, people are mistreated by the system every day all over the country. And that's what he devoted his life to trying to correct.

Was he respected by his fellow attorneys and by judges?

Well, Jeff was certainly respected by attorneys. He was widely considered one of the best attorneys around. Judges respected him. Prosecutors respected him, although he was in their face and he was calling them out and he was saying things that maybe a lot of us wouldn't have the nerve to say. So they respected him. And just because of his personality, they liked him. But at the same time, they probably cringed when they saw him coming because they knew something was going to happen that they might not like.

But he is one of the people, certainly in the criminal justice world for the state of Texas, that has really made a difference. And I think that's what Jeff wanted to do in his life. And he had a successful life because he was able to do that.

Josh Dugger's Prison Sentence for Child Pornography Has Been Extended

By **Celeste Houmard** with **Fox 8** | March 17, 2023

Dugger, whose large family was the focus of TLC's "19 Kids and Counting," was convicted on child pornography charges in 2021.

The 35-year-old's original release date was set for August 12, 2032, according

to Insider. Earlier this week, Insider reports, online prison records showed his release was pushed back until Aug. 22, 2032. The records now show a release date of Oct. 2, 2032.

According to Fox News, Duggar is reportedly in solitary confinement after he allegedly was found to have a contraband cellphone.

Duggar is serving his sentence at FCI Seago federal prison, according to jail records.

The former reality TV star was sentenced in May to about 12 1/2 years in prison after he was convicted of receiving and possessing child pornography.

Prosecutors had asked U.S. District Judge Timothy Brooks to give a maximum term of 20 years to Duggar. They argued in a pre-sentencing court filing that Duggar has a “deep-seated, pervasive and violent sexual interest in children.”

Duggar was arrested in April 2021 after a Little Rock police detective found child porn files were being shared by a computer traced to Duggar. Investigators testified that images depicting the sexual abuse of children, including toddlers, were downloaded in 2019 onto a computer at a car dealership Duggar owned.

TLC canceled “19 Kids and Counting” in 2015 following allegations that Duggar had molested four of his sisters and a babysitter years earlier. Authorities began investigating the abuse in 2006 after receiving a tip from a family friend but concluded that the statute of limitations on any possible charges had expired.

Duggar’s parents said he had confessed to the fondling and apologized. After the allegations resurfaced in 2015, Duggar apologized publicly for unspecified behavior and resigned as a lobbyist for the Family Research Council, a conservative Christian group. Months later, he publicly apologized for cheating on his wife and a pornography addiction, for which he then sought treatment.

Insider News

On the Other Side

By **Mandi Brady**, a **TCCC Resident Family Member**

I’m not one for keeping quiet. Those that know me know that. Anyone who remembers me from working at the facility knows I was loud, obnoxious, and that I had an opinion. But oh, how my whole life has changed.

Two years ago this month, I was terminated for breaking rules. I have no problem owning up to it or telling the truth. Lots of juicy stories have come out about me and my husband...torrid stories of sexual encounters and sneaking around. I often told him if I knew I was going to get fired we should have done SOMETHING. But alas we did not. Sorry to disappoint our haters but nothing like that ever happened.

We are all grown here and there is no need to hide or be embarrassed about details. My husband and I did exchange photos. In this day and age of technology, that is par for the course in most relationships. But we all know the end result was my termination and his lock up in solitary for six long months and subsequent return to prison.

Most expected things to end there, but it was just getting started. On April 9, 2022, the members of F.A.C.T.S. held a Public Awareness Event in Littlefield...and I got married to my best friend, Felton Brady. I have zero regrets.

Fast forward to April of 2023. I have currently been denied as a collateral contact for my husband. No phone calls, letters, or visits. In an email from his case manager, I was told I am not a “pro-social collateral contact” at this time. This just goes to show you that everything done in our pasts are held against us. But in a separate email that McLane is sending around the Capitol, I am labeled a security risk.

Funny how MTC didn’t think enough of me to promote me in rank the many times I applied, but I am suddenly a huge “security risk”! Passed over by a big buffoon and a half capable officer that knew less than me and became my Sergeant. Nonetheless, these are just excuses to keep me from my husband. In December of 2022, President Joe Biden signed the Respect for Marriage Act and Congress finds the following:

“No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family.”

Quietly sitting by and trusting that this “rehabilitation program” will work is a mistake. Families following the rules of a dictator whose head is as big as her hairdo hasn’t gotten men released. When I made the decision to become an advocate for change, I knew it would come with hardships. The past two years have been full of them.

Now that I am on the other side, I am louder than ever. Right now, all that matters has been taken from me, but it won’t always be like this. Jesus told the Pharisees,

“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matthew 19.6).

Marriage is of God. This is bigger than Marsha McLane.

