



Robert O. Dawson Juvenile Law Institute

31st Annual Juvenile Law Conference

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Horseshoe Bay Resort
Horseshoe Bay, Texas

Biographical Information on Speakers

RON BEAL

Professor Beal has taught at Baylor Law School for 35 years. He has taught statutory interpretation for the last 30 years. He is considered an expert in Texas Administrative Law and for the past 20 years has published a two-volume treatise entitled Texas Administrative Practice and Procedure, (Lexis 2017, 20th Ed.). Professor Beal has practiced in the State of Texas for the last 20 years and is Of Counsel to the firm of Enoch Keever, Austin, Texas.

DR. RITA CAMERON- WEDDING

Rita Cameron Wedding, Ph.D. is a professor of Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies at Sacramento State University (California). Dr. Cameron Wedding's curriculum *Implicit Bias: Impact on Decision-Making*, has been used to train judges, public defenders, practitioners in child welfare, juvenile justice, law enforcement and education in jurisdictions throughout the country since 2005. In 2013 in response to the U.S. Department of Justice's 3-year investigation and findings of civil rights violations, Dr. Cameron Wedding led a training team of 5 experts to provide implicit bias training to the entire Shelby County Juvenile Court. Dr. Cameron Wedding has conducted implicit bias Train the Trainer Institutes, webinars, and curriculum development in numerous agencies and states throughout the country. She is a presenter for Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice and Reform Conference. In 2017, her curriculum on implicit bias will be incorporated into the police de-escalation curriculum for *Fight Crime Invest In Kids* and used to train over 5000 in-service and academy officers in the U.S.

PATRICIA CUMMINGS

Patricia Cummings has practiced criminal and juvenile law for over 25 years. Ms. Cummings began her career as a briefing attorney for the Eighth District Court of Appeals with plans to use the appellate experience as a foundation for pursuing her lifelong ambition of becoming a successful trial lawyer. Ms. Cummings transitioned to private practice, focusing on defending juveniles and adults charged with crimes. Ms. Cummings taught the criminal defense clinic at the University of Texas School of Law from 2002 to 2014. She has served as chair of the Texas Board of Legal Specialization's Juvenile Law Board Examination Committee and was a board member for two local children's organizations. Ms. Cummings was named one of the top ten Winning Women Lawyers of 2014 by the Texas Lawyer. Ms. Cummings grew up in El Paso, Texas and is a graduate of the University of Texas and the University of Houston Law Center.

BRIAN FISCHER

Brian Fischer is an attorney in Houston who has been practicing Juvenile and DFPS Law and is board certified in Juvenile Law having been certified with the first class in 2001. He has spoken over 30 different seminars on Juvenile Law and DFPS Law across the State of Texas including the Robert O. Dawson Juvenile Law Institute and each of the Juvenile and CPS conferences sponsored by the Juvenile Law Section of the Houston Bar Association. He is a past chair of the State Bar of Texas Juvenile Law Section, Houston Bar Association Juvenile Law Section and is the current chair of the Houston Bar Association Juvenile Law Section and conference chair of all of the Juvenile Law and DFPS seminars sponsored by the HBA-Juvenile Law Section. Brian is also a Substitute Associate Judge and Juvenile Law Master in the Juvenile Courts of Harris County.

PAT GARZA

Pat Garza is an Associate Judge in the 386th District Court of Bexar County. He received his law degree from South Texas College of Law in 1980, and was hired by Bexar County District Attorney's Office that same year. In January 1983, he was appointed Chief of the Juvenile Law Section of the Bexar County District Attorney's Office. He left the District Attorney's Office in 1985 to enter private practice. In 1989, he was appointed Referee and Master for the 289th Juvenile District Court of Bexar County. In 1998, he was appointed Associated Judge for the newly created 386th District Court of Bexar County. He is a former Adjunct Professor of Law from St. Mary's Law School in San Antonio and is Board Certified in the area of Juvenile Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. Judge Garza is the Editor of the Juvenile Law Reporter for the State Bar of Texas which is published quarterly and can be found at juvenilelaw.org. He also provides the latest case law updates for the Texas Juvenile Law Section website. He is a Juvenile Law Exam Commissioner, and as a Commissioner has the responsibility to prepare and grade exams for Juvenile Law Board Certification. Judge Garza has been presiding over juvenile law cases in San Antonio for over 20 years and is an award winning author and frequent speaker in the area of juvenile law. He received his law degree from South Texas College of Law in 1980. In January 1983, after only three years in the District Attorney's Office, he was appointed Chief of the Juvenile Law Section. He left the District Attorney's Office in 1985 to enter private practice. Four years after entering private practice, Judge Garza was appointed Referee and Master for the 289th Juvenile District Court of Bexar County. In 1998, he was appointed Associated Judge for the newly created 386th Juvenile District Court of Bexar County. Judge Garza has authored many articles of juvenile law and serves as Newsletter Editor for the Juvenile Law Section of the State Bar of Texas. Judge Garza is a former adjunct professor of juvenile law from St. Mary's Law School and is also a proud member of the 2001 inaugural class of Juvenile Board Certified Practitioners, becoming board certified in the area of juvenile law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in that year.

DAVID GONZALEZ

David Gonzalez is the founding partner of Sumpter & Gonzalez, a criminal defense firm that attempts to combine the practice of law and social work. The Firm's mission is to serve clients beyond the legal issues of their case and address the underlying reasons a person is involved in the criminal justice system. David froze to death at Dartmouth College, and then went out West to Stanford Law School in search of warmer weather. David met his wife on the first day of law school, but she pretty much ignored him for the next year until he was able to convince her to date him. The two of them juggle their law practice with four young children in tow. In his free time, David teaches trial advocacy at the law school, lobbies his wife to allow him to pursue a Ph.D. in behavioral economics, and routinely embarrasses his kids in public.

CYNTHIA "CYNDI" PORTER GORE

Cynthia graduated from Texas Tech University School of Law in 1994. Soon after graduating from Law school Cynthia began her career working for the Lubbock County Criminal District Attorney's Office. After the birth of her first child, she went into private practice where she defended adults and juveniles accused of criminal offenses and children and parents involved in CPS allegations. Cynthia became board certified in Criminal Law in 2000. After 17 years in private practice, she accepted the fulltime position as presiding judge at the Allen Municipal Court where she has created a Mental Health/ Substance Abuse Dockets for Adult and Juveniles along with expanding the Teen Court program for juveniles who receive fine only citations.

JR HANCOCK

Mr. Hancock graduated from St. Mary's University School of Law in 1994 and began his legal career in private practice in Williamson County. After starting with a general practice, he narrowed his practice to the areas of Juvenile Law and Criminal Law within the first few years. In 2002 he qualified for and was awarded Board Certification in Juvenile Law. Juvenile Law has continued to be his focus, and now after practicing more than two decades, his practice is almost exclusively in that area. In March of 2017 he was chosen to become an Attorney Advocate for the Williamson County Residential CORE program. In this capacity, in addition to his juvenile caseload, he represents CORE residents and provides his legal expertise as well as encouragement to assist the residents in achieving successful completion of the program.

KIM HAYES

Kim Hayes is the Juvenile Chief of the Lubbock County Criminal District Attorney's Office and has held that position since December 1999. Kim graduated from the Texas Tech University School of Law in 1993. Following graduation from law school, Kim worked as a Research / Briefing Attorney for the Seventh District Court of Appeals, Amarillo, Texas, and then as an associate in a private practice law firm focusing on criminal, juvenile, and appellate cases. Throughout her career, Kim has also taught several college courses on topics such as Juvenile Law, Criminal Law, and Business Law.

KAMERON JOHNSON

Kameron D. Johnson has been representing juveniles for twenty-five years at both the trial and appellate levels. He is licensed to practice in state and federal courts including the United States Supreme Court. He currently serves as the Chief Juvenile Public Defender for Travis County where he directs the largest and most experienced group of juvenile practitioners in the state of Texas. A graduate of The University of Texas School of Law he is board certified in both juvenile and criminal law. A former adjunct professor at the University of Texas School of Law he has taught juvenile law, trial and appellate advocacy. A frequent lecturer, speaker and writer he serves on the Juvenile Law Council and various boards in the areas of juvenile law, criminal justice and indigent defense.

LYNN KESSEL

Lynn Kessel is the Assistant Director, Mental Health Services at Williamson County Juvenile Services (WCJS), and has worked for the department for 8 years. She has a graduate degree in Professional Counseling, an undergraduate degree in Business Administration, and is a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor with the State of Texas. She is trained in several trauma modalities including TF-CBT (Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing). Her first career was in human resources and management. Lynn is also a professional artist and shows her work at various galleries, exhibits, and festivals. She designed a one month long art program at WCJS that has exposed the youth to numerous pro-social activities and skills

JILL MATA

Jill Mata is General Counsel for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department since her appointment in November 2014. Prior to that position she was the Juvenile Division Chief of the Bexar County District Attorney's Office in San Antonio, Texas, having held that position since January 1999 and having worked as a prosecutor in that office for over 25 years. Ms. Mata received her board certification in Juvenile Law in 2001 and served on the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, Juvenile Law Advisory Commission from 2009 to 2015. She was selected in 2013 to be a member of the Juvenile Prosecutor Leadership Network (JPLN), which is a part of the National Resource Center for Juvenile Prosecutors (NRCJP) housed at Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute in Washington, DC. Ms. Mata is a past chair and current council member of the Juvenile Law Section of the State Bar of Texas and is a frequent speaker on Juvenile Law Topics. Ms. Mata began her career at the District Attorney's office in 1989 as a misdemeanor prosecutor and subsequently worked in various sections, including the Career Criminal Unit, Family Violence Unit, Juvenile Unit and General Felony. She has extensive jury trial experience including property crimes, drug offenses, crimes of violence against woman and children, juvenile crimes, murder, and capital murder. She received her J.D. from St. Mary's University School of Law and B.A. from Trinity University in San Antonio.

KIRSTA MELTON

Kirsta Leeburg Melton is the Deputy Criminal Chief of the Human Trafficking and Transnational/Organized Crime Section of the Office of the Texas Attorney General. From 2000-2014 she prosecuted in the Family Justice Unit of the Bexar County District Attorney's Office, combating human trafficking, physical and sexual abuse of children and family violence, and in 2012 helped establish and lead the Bexar County DA's Human Trafficking Unit. Melton also chaired the Alamo Area Coalition against Trafficking, a regional multi-disciplinary group of law enforcement, non-profits, government agencies, business people, and academics assembled to coordinate the fight against human trafficking. She has trained more than 15,000 people across the state on human trafficking and has testified on multiple occasions before the Texas legislature on trafficking related issues. Melton graduated from Cornell University in 1993 and received her JD and Masters in Public Affairs from the University of Texas in 1998. In addition to prosecuting, Melton is one of the founding members of Truckers against Trafficking, a nationwide campaign dedicated to educating, equipping, empowering and mobilizing the trucking industry in the fight against human trafficking.

TYRONE MONCRIFFE

Tyrone C. Moncriffe is Board Certified in Criminal Law. He is certified first chair in Death Penalty cases in Harris County, Texas. Tyrone is Board Certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy. He is a faculty member of the Criminal Law Institute. He graduated from Texas Southern University Magna Cum Laude and Thurgood Marshall School of Law in 1982. He has been in private practice since 1983 where he handles criminal cases. He is an active faculty member of the Trial Advocacy Institute where he assists with training members in various trial tactics such as Voir Dire, direct/cross examination and the psychology of stories as they relate to trials. He is an active member of many professional associations and a past Director of TCDLA.

MICHAEL NERNEY

Michael Nerney is a consultant in Substance Abuse Prevention and Education, with over thirty-five years' experience in the field. As the former Director of the Training Institute of Narcotic and Drug Research, Inc. (NDRI), his responsibilities included the management of a statewide training system which delivered more than 450 training programs to substance abuse treatment and prevention professionals annually. During this time, Mr. Nerney wrote and was awarded a federal grant under the Youth-At-Risk Act, to design and deliver training programs for residential facilities within the New York State Division for Youth. Under this grant, a dedicated team designed and provided five programs related to substance abuse, including an Overview of Substance Abuse, Adolescent Concerns, Chemically Dependent Family Systems, Relapse Prevention, and Prevention Strategies. Mr. Nerney's particular areas of expertise include Psycho-pharmacology, Adolescent Chemical Dependency, Relapse Prevention, Gender Differences in Communication, and Managing Violent Incidents. He has written both participant and trainer manuals for the programs mentioned above, as well as a number of others.

LAURA PETERSON

Laura Peterson is a graduate of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the University of Virginia School of Law. Her early career focused on criminal appeals and she is a former Dallas County Public Defender. Since 1999, Laura has been in private practice in Dallas County focusing her efforts on representing children. Laura is board certified in both juvenile and criminal law. She was elected to the Council of the State Bar of Texas Juvenile Law Section and served from 2005-2016, serving as Chair in 2014. Laura is a member of the Exam Commission for the Texas Board of Legal Specialization for juvenile law and the Past Chair of the Dallas Bar Association Juvenile Justice Committee. She is a contributing editor to Attorney at Law magazine in the area of juvenile law and a frequent lecturer on juvenile justice issues.

SHARON PRUITT

Sharon Pruitt is an assistant attorney general with Juvenile Crime Intervention (JCI) of the Office of the Texas Attorney General. AAG Pruitt assists law enforcement and criminal justice agencies with gang database management, criminal street gang, and prison gang legal issues. She presents in tandem with Texas DPS staff regarding the benefits of TxGANG, and assists local officers and prosecutors with legal research related to gang database management, injunctions and prosecutions. AAG Pruitt presents legal training to judges, lawyers and law enforcement at statewide and regional conferences on the admissibility of social networking and other electronically stored evidence against gang members in court. Additionally, AAG Pruitt provides prosecutor assistance both in and outside of court in juvenile-related matters, addresses juvenile-related questions for law enforcement, probation and school administrators, updates juvenile-related agency publications, and provides the legislative update for agency law enforcement officers across the state. Before joining the Office of the Attorney General, Mrs. Pruitt was a juvenile prosecutor for the Gregg County District Attorney's Office. She has also prosecuted in Smith County and in Harris County. In 2001, Mrs. Pruitt became Board Certified in Juvenile Law. She previously served as Chair of the State Bar of Texas Juvenile Law Section Council and the maximum two terms for the juvenile section of the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.

JENNA REBLIN

Jenna graduated from UT-Austin with a degree in government and a certificate in Children and Public Policy. She graduated from St. Mary's University School of Law in May 2012. While attending law school, she clerked at the Travis County District Attorney's Office on summer and winter breaks. In her third year, she interned at the Bexar County Criminal District Attorney's Office in the Juvenile Division and was then hired as an Assistant Criminal District Attorney in November 2012. At the Juvenile Division, she prosecuted misdemeanor offenses and assisted with felony offenses. Subsequently, she was promoted to third chair felony prosecutor in the Criminal Trial Division and appointed as the Animal Cruelty Special Prosecutor for the District Attorney's Office. In November 2016, Jenna was hired with the Texas Juvenile Justice Department as a staff attorney and has been working on the Legal Education & Technical Assistance Helpline and officer disciplinary matters.

BETTY RODRIGUEZ

Betty E. Rodriguez, Attorney at Law, received her Bachelor of Social Work degree from the University of Texas and a J.D. from the University of Texas Law School. She began her career as a caseworker for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Austin and has been working with youth ever since. Betty was a staff attorney at the Travis County Juvenile Public Defender's Office for 22 years. She is board certified in juvenile law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization and is currently in private practice focused primarily on Juvenile defense.

RILEY SHAW

Riley Shaw is the Deputy Chief of the Criminal Division for the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office where he has prosecuted juvenile delinquency and adult criminal cases for the past 18 years. He is Board Certified in Juvenile Law and is a frequent speaker on Criminal and Juvenile Law topics for the State Bar of Texas and for local Bar Associations throughout the State. Mr. Shaw has served as a Guest Editor of the 7th Edition of Texas Juvenile Law by Robert Dawson, is a past recipient of the Oscar A. Sherrell Memorial Award from the Texas District and County Attorneys Association, and was named a Top Criminal Attorney by Fort Worth, Texas Magazine. Mr. Shaw is past Chair of the Juvenile Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, serves as Legal Liaison and Advisory Board Member of the Texas Violent Gang Task Force, and previously served on the governing board of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Mr. Shaw is widely-recognized as an expert on Juvenile Law in the State of Texas.

APRIL SMITH

April E. Smith is a solo practitioner handling criminal defense, juvenile and CPS cases and appeals in each of those areas. Before practicing law, she obtained her B.B.A. from East Texas State University with a double major in accounting and computer science. She obtained a Master's Degree from Amber University. She obtained her J.D. from Texas Tech University School of Law. Following law school, she served as a Briefing Attorney for Justice Charles R. Schulte on the Eighth Court of Appeals in El Paso. Thereafter, she served as an Assistant District Attorney in Dallas County for 11 years (two years in the trial division and nine years in the appellate division) before starting her own practice. April serves as a writ master for several felony courts in Dallas County investigating claims alleged in 11.07 writs of habeas corpus and occasionally presides over hearings in such matters. April serves as a mediator in CPS cases having completed basic, family and CPS mediation courses. April is a current member of DCDLA (Dallas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association) and TCDLA (Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association). She is a former board member of DCDLA.

NYDIA THOMAS

Nydia D. Thomas has an extensive background in juvenile law and juvenile justice system administration at the state and local levels. At the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, she serves as Special Counsel for Legal Education and Technical Assistance (LETA) in the Office of the General Counsel. Ms. Thomas is a professional trainer and recurring faculty member for the Correctional Management Institute of Texas and the Juvenile Law Section of the State Bar of Texas. She is a graduate of Howard University School of Law and gained valuable experience on Capitol Hill while working for a Member of Congress and a Washington-based congressional research foundation. Nydia is a former councilmember and Mayor-Pro Tem of Cleveland, Texas and has received both gubernatorial and attorney general appointments. She has also served as Chair of the State Bar of Texas Juvenile Law Section and the African-American Lawyers Section. Ms. Thomas has published topical articles on juvenile law and is a contributing editor of the state's foremost juvenile justice treatise, Texas Juvenile Law. During interim legislative cycles, she has been actively involved as principal facilitator and a TJJD subject-matter liaison for juvenile justice practitioner workgroups such as the Fingerprint Advisory Committee, the Juvenile Records Advisory Committee and Task Force for Improving the Outcomes of Juveniles Adjudicated for Sexual Offenses. In her spare time, she enjoys genealogical research and creative writing. Most recently, she developed the audience discussion guide and educational curriculum for the award-winning independent short film, The Example. Ms. Thomas will be featured in an upcoming book Lessons from 100 Successful African-American Lawyers.

DR. GINA VINCENT

Gina Vincent, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor and Co-Director of the Law & Psychiatry Program in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. She also is President of the National Youth Screening and Assessment Partners (NYSAP), a technical assistance center for assisting juvenile justice agencies with the selection and implementation of risk assessment and behavioral health screening tools. Dr. Vincent has received funding from NIMH, NIDA, the MacArthur Foundation, and OJJDP for studies relevant to risk for reoffending, mental health problems, and substance abuse among youth involved in the juvenile justice system. She is author of the widely-used Risk Assessment in Juvenile Probation: A Guidebook for Implementation manual. She has published, lectured, and presented research at over 150 international, national, and local juvenile justice agency conferences in the areas of risk assessment, implementing risk assessment in juvenile justice, and adolescent substance abuse, callous-unemotional traits, and mental health symptoms.