

Court withdraws April execution date for Andre Thomas

March 7, 2023

A Grayson County court withdrew the April 5 execution date for Andre Thomas—a paranoid schizophrenic prisoner who gouged out both his eyes—to allow his legal team time to demonstrate their client is not mentally competent.

The [15th Judicial District Court](#) on March 7 withdrew the execution date for Thomas, who was convicted and sentenced to be executed for the 2004 stabbing death of his estranged wife, Laura Boren; their 4-year-old son, Andre; and his 13-month-old step-daughter, Leyha Hughes.



Andre Thomas
(Source: Texas
Department of
Criminal Justice)

After leaving the scene of the deadly stabbing, Thomas stabbed himself in the chest three times. Five days later, while in the Grayson County Jail, he plucked out his right eye, citing a literal interpretation of Matthew 5:29 as his reason.

Although he was sent to a state hospital after his self-mutilation, after 47 days he was returned to Grayson County for trial.

Three years later, after Thomas—who is Black—was found guilty by an all-white jury and sentenced to be executed, he gouged out his other eye and swallowed it.

Thomas has been confined the past 15 years at the Wayne Scott Unit, where the state’s most mentally ill prisoners are housed.

“The court was right to follow the Constitution by withdrawing Andre Thomas’s execution date. The Constitution and Texas law forbid the execution of people who are insane. Mr. Thomas is such a person, as he is not competent to be executed, lacking a rational understanding of the state’s reason for his execution,” said Maurie Levin, attorney for Thomas.

[Legal counsel for Thomas asserted](#) the state’s actions prevented them from obtaining until last week “even the most basic tools necessary to make the showing of his incompetence.”

The order by the 15th Judicial District Court grants Thomas’ attorneys until July 5 to file a motion based on an assessment of his mental incompetence.

“The court’s order gives Mr. Thomas the time necessary to make the threshold showing that his lifelong, profound mental illness, characterized by fixed auditory and visual hallucinations, distorts everything he says, thinks, and does, and he is not competent for execution,” Levin said.

Widespread calls for clemency

At least a dozen Baptist ministers in Texas were among more than 100 faith leaders who wrote a letter last month to Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles [urging clemency for Thomas](#).

“In Andre Thomas’ case, we are firmly convinced that granting him clemency is the path of morality, faith and justice,” the letter stated.

Pastors Steve Wells of South Main Baptist Church in Houston, Garrett Vickrey of Woodland Baptist Church in San Antonio and Jake Maxwell of Second Baptist Church in Lubbock, along with Associate Pastor Scotty Swingler of Sugar Land Baptist Church are among the faith leaders who signed the Feb. 15 letter urging clemency for Thomas.

Others who signed the letter include Stephen Reeves, executive director of Fellowship Southwest; David Morgan, executive director of the T.B. Maston Foundation for Christian Ethics; Rick McClatchy, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Texas; and Pastor Frederick Haynes of Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas.

Thomas’ legal counsel insist their client is “one of the most mentally ill prisoners in Texas history,” and [77 Texas mental health professionals](#) also wrote the governor and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to request clemency.

“Guiding this blind psychotic man to the gurney for execution offends our sense of humanity and serves no legitimate purpose,” Levin said. “Mr. Thomas will remain confined, as he has been, and the public will be kept safe.”