

Texas carries out first US execution of 2018

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Anthony Allen Shore, 55, was executed at the Walls Unit of the Texas state prison in Huntsville, Texas, Thursday evening. He died by lethal injection of one dose of pentobarbital, a short-acting barbiturate, and was pronounced dead at 6:28 p.m., local time.

Shore was the first person executed in the United States in 2018. Known as the “Tourniquet killer,” he was convicted of murdering four girls and a young woman between the ages of 9 and 21 years old from 1986 to 1995 in Harris County, Texas.

“I wish I could undo the past, but it is what it is,” said the former wrecker driver, according to the *Houston Chronicle*. He apparently cleared up questions about his involvement with other possible victims before the execution, saying, “There are no others.”

Shore’s victims included Laurie Lee Tremblay, 14, in 1986; Maria Del Carmen Estrada, 21, in 1992; Diana Rebollar, 9, in 1994; and Dana Sanchez, 16, in 1995. Shore sexually assaulted all of his victims and then strangled them with homemade tourniquets.

All of the murders went unsolved until Shore was arrested in 2003 by Houston police after they matched his DNA to body material found under Estrada’s fingernails. Shore’s DNA was on file from a 1997 no-contest plea to sexually molesting his two daughters. After hours of interrogation, Shore confessed to all of the killings. He told police, “I think if I tell you what I’ve done that it will release the evilness, and I would feel better.”

Shore was convicted of the rape and murder of Estrada in 2004. He blamed the murder on voices in his head telling him he was “going to have her, regardless, to possess her in some way.” He told police in a taped interview played during the trial, “I didn’t set out to kill her. That was not my intent. But it got out of hand.”

At Shore’s sentencing, his attorney told the jury that his client wanted to be put to death to “sacrifice his life for what he has done.”

Shore had been scheduled to be put to death in October 2017, but a judge called off the execution after he confessed to two other murders just days before it was to take place. In an apparent effort to free another prisoner, he claimed he killed Melissa Trotter in 1998. Fellow death row inmate Larry Swearingen had been convicted of her murder. He also confessed to the murder of a missing mother whose skull was found in a Polk County field in 1995.

Texas Rangers, the state police, determined on the basis of “timelines and scientific testing” that Shore could not have committed the killings.

Shore’s legal team pointed last year to a previously undisclosed traumatic brain injury, likely suffered in a 1981 car accident, as a reason to stop his execution. Knox Nunnally, Shore’s court-appointed appellate lawyer, said, “We think if a jury had heard that evidence ... that it is possible a jury could have at least changed their decision that Mr. Shore deserved life [in prison] instead of death.”

Nunnally said he was not arguing that Shore was innocent or undeserving of punishment, but that courts should regard people with brain injuries the same way they look at minors and the intellectually disabled—as ineligible for execution based on decreased reasoning skills and culpability.

Shore’s appeal was turned down in early 2017 and the US Supreme Court refused to review his case in October.

Harris County, where Shore’s crimes were committed, is home to the most condemned and executed prisoners in the US in the modern era, with 116 taking place since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976. Texas has carried out the most of any state, 546. The state has four more executions scheduled before its stock of lethal injection drugs expires on July 20.

Newly elected Harris County District Attorney Kim

Ogg, a Democrat, told the *Texas Observer* that she doesn't see the death penalty as a deterrent to crime and that it is "pure retribution," but that she still believes in it. In Ogg's first year in office, for the first time in 30 years, Harris County didn't carry out an execution.

In two death penalty cases that made it to the Supreme Court in 2017, Ogg opted for reduced sentences. In the case of death row inmate Duane Buck, the high court ruled he should receive a new trial because an expert witness had testified that Buck was more likely to be a future danger to society because he was black. Ogg offered a plea deal to a sentence of life in prison instead of a new trial.

In November, Ogg asked the Texas Court of Criminal appeals to reduce the sentence of inmate Bobby Moore from death to life in prison. Moore's case had prompted the Supreme Court to invalidate Texas's outdated method of determining intellectual disability in inmates sentenced to death.

However, the district attorney said the punishment for Shore was appropriate for him as one of "the worst of the worst" and a "true serial killer."

"Any time a person is subject to government's greatest sanction, it merits thoughtful review," Ogg said through a spokesman Wednesday, the *Texas Tribune* reported. "We have proceeded as the law directs and satisfied all doubts."



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