

STATEMENT OF THEA POSEL AND RAOUL SCHONEMANN, COUNSEL FOR RAMIRO GONZALES

Tonight the State of Texas executed Ramiro Gonzales for a crime he committed as an eighteen-year-old boy. The man put to death for those acts was a different person. We are heartened that so many of you saw this.

Without the tools, support, or guidance that many of us take for granted, in the face of abuse and neglect most will never know, Ramiro floundered as a lonely and directionless child and teenager. He made poor choices. He sought escape through drugs. And he caused irrevocable harms.

He took the life of Bridget Townsend, and he attacked Florence Teich. We grieve for these women and their families. So did he.

But the Ramiro who the State of Texas killed tonight was not the Ramiro who committed these crimes twenty years ago. The Ramiro who left this world was, by *all* accounts, a deeply spiritual, generous, patient, and intentional person, full of remorse, someone whose driving force was love. He sought to spread and embody love in all aspects of his life, even in the deprivation and physical isolation of death row where he lived for the past 18 years.

He showed love through his ministry to the men incarcerated alongside him—sometimes that looked like sermons and prayers, sometimes it looked like silly jokes, sometimes it looked like purchasing food for those without money in their accounts. He showed love in his relationships with many friends across the world, from pen pals and spiritual advisors to many semesters of our students, all of whom were touched by his genuine care for them and interest in their lives. He showed love to his family and friends through his art, his words, and his actions. And he showed love through his tireless efforts to donate a kidney to a stranger in need.

Ramiro knew he took something from this world he could never give back. He lived with that shame every day, and it shaped the person he worked so hard to become. If this country's legal system was intended to encourage rehabilitation, he would be an exemplar.

Ramiro grew. Ramiro changed. May we all strive to do the same.