

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Nathan Fennell, 512-637-5222, [nfennell@fairdefense.org](mailto:nfennell@fairdefense.org)

### TFDP CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT CHALLENGES ILLEGAL JAILING IN SMITH COUNTY

**TYLER, TX** – The Texas Fair Defense Project (TFDP) and civil rights lawyer A. Dami Animashaun have filed a class action lawsuit against Smith County, Texas for illegally detaining Texans in the Smith County Jail for days or weeks after they had finished their sentences:

- Named plaintiff Lively was illegally jailed for 8 days after his release date.
- Named plaintiff Hughes was illegally jailed for 27 days after his release date.
- Named plaintiff Alonzo was illegally jailed for 33 days after her release date.

And they're not alone. Many have languished in the Smith County Jail for days or weeks after finishing their sentences—all on the taxpayer's dime.

"I just wanted to get home to my family," says Ms. Alonzo. "I was supposed to be released after I went to court, but it took 33 days. Every day, I asked when I would get out. No one could tell me."

"Our clients made a deal with Smith County," says TFDP Executive Director Geoff Burkhart. "They gave up their right to trial, and the County promised to release them on a certain day. Smith County didn't hold up their end of the bargain."

"Smith County not only violated the law and deprived our clients of their liberty," says TFDP Staff Attorney Nathan Fennell. "The County also wasted taxpayer dollars and strained an overcrowded facility. It's not fair to our clients, it's not fair to jail staff, and it's not fair to taxpayers."

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#### About [Texas Fair Defense Project](#)

*The Texas Fair Defense Project fights to end the criminalization of poverty in Texas. We envision a system of justice that upholds the dignity and civil rights of all people, regardless of income, race, or gender.*