

Profile of a **POPULAR** Advocate:
George Stokes



My name is George Stokes Sr. I am 55 years old. I was born and raised in Abilene, Texas.

What got me into good government as an advocate is because my son Matthew Stokes didn't receive a fair trial. The reason he didn't receive a fair trial is because we had several drive-by shootings at our home. Matthew was 19 years old and he lived at home. We called police after every drive-by shooting and identified the shooters, and we were told they couldn't do nothing because nobody got shot. We were told to arm ourselves. We had 8 shooting incidents at our home within six months. Then Matthew moved in with his girlfriend and baby boy. In the last drive by shooting they came to his house and there were people in a pick-up truck and a car. They got out throwing beer bottles at him, and one of them pulled out a gun and shot at him. Matthew yelled at his cousin to get his gun. His cousin and Matthew had been working on his cousin's car when the shooters drove up. This happened around 6:00 p. m. It was daylight. When Matthew was handed the gun by his cousin, he shot at the shooter but only hit the car. The shooter ran back to his car when he realized Matthew had a gun. The people from the truck also ran back to the truck.

Matthew was arrested for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. The shooter was on probation at the time of this incident for home invasion. Two charges of home invasion. No charges were brought against him for going to Matthew's home and opening fire.

We went to court with a court appointed lawyer who failed to investigate Matthew's case thoroughly. He also did not call an important witness in his case. Ineffective assistance of counsel, as some might call it.

The jury was not a jury of his peers. They were all elderly people except for one juror that was Matthew's age, but we later found out he was on medication for a mental disability. During the trial, some critical statements were left out. Everything was turned around with Matthew being made the aggressor. He received a sentence of 12 years in prison. The shooter continued to terrorize people. In what appears to be a classic case of self-defense and where in many places Matthew might not have been arrested, conviction and a 12 year sentence boggle human understanding.

We received support letters from a retired police sergeant who was police sergeant at the time of the shootings. The judge who presided over his case also wrote a letter of no contest when Matthew came up for parole. Also a member of the Justice Dept. wrote a support letter because he believed the trouble came to Matthew, and Matthew didn't go looking for trouble. I believe the judge should have reduced the sentence and maybe done a great deal more. He had the power.

That's when I discovered our justice system is broken. I joined L. U. L. A. C. (League of United Latin American Citizens), and we had three civil rights marches and several community meetings. We worked a few complaint cases. We succeeded in making police complaint forms available to citizens. I was elected Civil Rights Chairman and Sergeant of Arms for L. U. L. A. C. We received a complaint from the De Leon Community that an Anglo person had threatened to shoot at a Cinco De Mayo Fiesta if it proceeded to happen. We made a trip to De Leon and met with the media and informed them the threats were made at a city council meeting and the

threats were not taken seriously by city council members, but Hispanics took the threats seriously and we elected several citizens as L. U. L. A. C. members, and we succeeded in opening their own L. U. L. A. C. chapter. Then they went and talked to the Anglo who made the threats and he apologized for making the threats.

Then I received a complaint from Haskel, Texas. The complaint was on a teacher who squeezed a 5 year old student's cheeks and pulled his hair. We had several meetings about the issue, and N. A. A. C. P. followed through with it and resolved the problem. I then investigated complaints from two mothers about minor children being certified as adults in criminal cases. The two complainants talked to Rev. Le Roy Gillam who represents the Southeastern Christian Association (SECA) that he called in.

I verified the complaints, and he asked if we as L. U. L. A. C. would host them coming to Abilene. We hosted a community meeting, and Dr. Gillam took over their complaints. We also had a civil rights march with Dr. Gillam.

After that I joined the Texas State Client Council. I continued fighting for civil rights and against misconduct. I can't decide if a person is innocent or guilty and I don't try to prove anything about the case, but I investigate and read and look up laws and I try to make sure everyone's civil rights are protected. That is how I became involved in fighting civil rights, and this is what I do.