

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 12, 2008

Contact: Abby E. Dozier
Communications Specialist
PH: 817.212.4061

Dallas County D.A. Addresses Class of 2008

FORT WORTH, Texas – Dallas County District Attorney Craig Watkins '94 was the guest speaker at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law's December 2008 Hooding Ceremony on Dec. 12, 2008.

Sharing a personal experience of his own from earlier in the week, Watkins told the graduates of the power they hold as lawyers, and urged them to recognize and respect that responsibility early in their careers.

"It wasn't until I got to be a district attorney representing a large number of individuals that I realized the awesome responsibility that I had," Watkins said. "Looking back, I realized that when I entered a room, people would immediately respect me because I was a lawyer. It took me 15 years to realize that. I hope you realize it sooner.

"The challenge I have for you today is to remember that first day of law school, remember that fear you had. As you go along, always go back and remember, because those difficulties will make you who you are and will help you understand."

Watkins is a member of the first graduating class of Texas Wesleyan University School of Law. After working in private practice for a few years, he began his career as the criminal district attorney of Dallas County in January 2007. He is the first African-American to be elected as a district attorney in the state of Texas.

Two members of the graduating class were recognized for their individual accomplishments during law school. Nadia Gilkes received the Equal Justice Award, which recognized the 325.75 hours of *pro bono* legal service she donated to several organizations during her time as a law student. Sharesa Alexander received the MacLane & Boulware Endowed Scholarship, an award given to a graduate selected by the faculty who demonstrated high moral character during his or her law school career, and exhibits the potential and desire to become a successful, ethically conscious attorney.

The law school presented 53 students with the juris doctor degree. Associate dean for academic affairs Vickie Rainwater presented each graduate with a purple academic hood, the color of which represents a discipline in law. Degrees were presented by Dean Frederic White and conferred by University President Dr. Harold G. Jeffcoat.