

Mark Curriden, JD

Mark Curriden is a lawyer/journalist and founder of The Texas Lawbook. In addition, he is a contributing legal correspondent for The Houston Chronicle and the Dallas Business Journal.

Mark is the author of the best selling book *Contempt of Court: A Turn-of-the-Century Lynching That Launched a Hundred Years of Federalism*. The book received the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award and numerous other honors. He also is a frequent lecturer at bar associations, law firm retreats, judicial conferences and other events. His CLE presentations have been approved for ethics credit in nearly every state.

From 1988 to 1994, Mark was the legal affairs writer for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, where he covered the Georgia Supreme Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. He authored a three-part series of articles that exposed rampant use of drug dealers and criminals turned paid informants by local and federal law enforcement authorities, which led to Congressional oversight hearings. A related series of articles by Mark contributed to a wrongly convicted death row inmate being freed.

The Dallas Morning News made Mark its national legal affairs writer in 1996. For more than six years, Mark wrote extensively about the tobacco litigation, alleged price-fixing in the pharmaceutical industry, the Exxon Valdez litigation, and more than 25 cases before the Supreme Court of the United States. Mark also authored a highly-acclaimed 16-part series on the future of the American jury system. As part of his extensive coverage of the tobacco litigation, Mark unearthed confidential documents and evidence showing that the then Texas Attorney General, Dan Morales, had made a secret deal with a long-time lawyer and friend in which the friend would have profited hundreds of millions of dollars from the tobacco settlement. As a direct result of Mark's articles, the U.S. Department of Justice opened a criminal investigation, which led to the indictment and conviction of Mr. Morales.

For the past 25 years, Mark has been a senior contributing writer for the ABA Journal, which is the nation's largest legal publication. His articles have been on the cover of the magazine more than a dozen times. He has received scores of honors for his legal writing, including the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award, the American Judicature Society's Toni House Award, the American Trial Lawyer's Amicus Award, and the Chicago Press Club's Headliner Award. Twice, in 2001 and 2005, the American Board of Trial Advocates named Mark its "Journalist of the Year."

From 2002 to 2010, Mark was the senior communications counsel at Vinson & Elkins, a 750-lawyer global law firm.

Mark's book, *Contempt of Court*, tells the story of Ed Johnson, a young black man from Chattanooga, Tenn., in 1906. Johnson was falsely accused of rape, railroaded through the criminal justice system, found guilty and sentenced to death – all in three weeks. Two African-American lawyers stepped forward to represent Johnson on appeal. In doing so, they filed one of the first federal habeas petitions ever attempted in a state criminal case. The lawyers convinced the Supreme Court of the United States to stay Johnson's execution. But before they could have him released, a lynch mob, aided by the sheriff and his deputies, lynched Johnson. Angered, the Supreme Court ordered the arrest of the sheriff and leaders of the mob, charging them with contempt of the Supreme Court. It is the only time in U.S. history that the Supreme Court conducted a criminal trial.

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