Lift Your Voice Against Injustice

AMPLIFY!

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2021
7 PM * VIRTUAL EVENT

LIFT YOUR VOICE AGAINST INJUSTICE

#VOICESOFTHEINNOCENT
Dear Friends,

Thank you for joining us for our third annual **Voices of the Innocent** event, a special evening featuring the stories and perspectives of those directly impacted by the tragedy of wrongful convictions. We’ll recognize local champions who fight tirelessly on behalf of innocent individuals and come together as a community to demonstrate our commitment to racial justice and meaningful change in the criminal legal system.

This year’s theme is **“Amplify!”**, a small word that represents so much to this community. It signifies **lifting up** the voices of people who have been marginalized and harmed by the criminal legal system. It is a recognition of the **power of people** to come together as a movement and pool collective resources in service of freedom. And it is a **call to action** to work to end wrongful convictions through individual cases and systemic policies.

We need every member of our community to stand with us and commit to a more just and humane legal system. Together, we are confident that we can **Amplify** the **Voices of the Innocent**, free people who have been wrongfully convicted, and prevent future wrongful convictions.

Sincerely,

Radha Natarajan, Executive Director
New England Innocence Project
We are grateful to our speakers, all of whom have been directly impacted by the tragedy of wrongful convictions and who courageously share about the injustices they have suffered in order to prevent others from experiencing the same fate.

**Sean Ellis: Exoneration # 2364**

Arrested at the age of 19 for the murder of a police officer, Sean was convicted at his third trial only after two juries could not reach a unanimous verdict. Sean was exonerated of the murder in 2018 after spending nearly 22 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, and he was exonerated of firearm charges stemming from the same incident in 2021. Significant police corruption and misconduct, including witness coercion, as well as misleading forensic evidence, led to Sean’s wrongful convictions. Sean is currently a NEIP Trustee and is one of the founders of the “Exoneree Network,” an initiative funded by NEIP to support the practical, emotional, and spiritual reentry needs of exonerees.

**Robert Foxworth: Exoneration # 2739**

Robert spent nearly 30 years in prison for a murder in Boston that he did not commit. Robert’s wrongful conviction was based on mistaken eyewitness identification from suggestive identification procedures, false accusations, and official misconduct. He had an alibi and maintained his innocence from the time of his arrest. In fact, because he insisted on his innocence, he was twice denied parole. He was finally freed on December 23, 2020, and he was exonerated on January 13, 2021.
Jackie Hughes
Jackie Hughes has never stopped fighting for her brother, Jason Carroll, who was wrongfully convicted of murder in New Hampshire. Based on a false confession -- one of the leading causes of wrongful convictions -- Jason has now spent nearly 32 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Jackie and her children maintain a close relationship with Jason and are committed to helping him finally come home.

Katrina and Jerry Boyajian
Katrina and Jerry Boyajian were thrust into the world of wrongful convictions when they learned that the two men convicted of murdering Jerry’s brother, Jeffrey, were actually innocent. Both Fred Clay and James Watson were convicted of the 1979 murder of Jeffrey Boyajian in Boston. It was not until 2017 that the Boyajian family learned that the investigation and trials had been tainted by corruption, incompetence, poor judgment, racial bias, and insufficiently understood/poorly applied science. The Boyajians have developed and maintained a relationship with both Fred and James since their releases from prison and continue to participate in efforts that might lead to greater justice.

James Watson: Exoneration # 2693
James Watson spent nearly 41 years in prison for a murder in Boston that he did not commit. James’ wrongful conviction stemmed from numerous factors that have been identified in other wrongful conviction cases: mistaken cross-racial eyewitness identifications, misleading forensic evidence, perjury, official misconduct, and an inadequate legal defense. James was finally freed from prison on April 16, 2020, and exonerated on November 10, 2020.
ARTIST SUPPORTERS

The New England Innocence Project thanks the following artists for sharing their talent and supporting the fight against wrongful convictions.

Grooversity

Grooversity is an innovative and creative drumming project envisioned by Brazilian percussionist Marcus Santos to promote music as an educational resource, entertainment and as a catalyst for social change. Grooversity is based on community outreach for positive outcomes while targeting global diversity awareness.

Marcus Santos

A contemporary percussionist and educator, Marcus is a native of Salvador, Bahia in Brazil. He is a versatile performer with experience in Pop, Rock, Hip Hop, Jazz and World music styles. As an educator, he commits his life to the study, teaching and performance of his hometown’s Afro-Brazilian music and heritage.

Marcus performed for the president of Brazil, TEDx and with the “One World Band” produced by MTV. Marcus also played at the Sony Pictures Oscar nominated movie ‘Rachel’s Getting Married’ with Anne Hathaway. He has been honored with the 2013 KOSA Recognition award, Outstanding Arts Performer Award by the Brazilian Immigrant Center (2008) as well as Outstanding Percussionist Award by Berklee College of Music in 2004.

Marcus is the author of the DVD ‘Modern Approach to Pandeiro’ and performed in the DVD ‘Musically Speaking II’ by BOSE. Marcus has lead workshops on Afro-Brazilian percussion and music for Social Change in universities and conventions around the world such as Carnegie Hall, PASIC and Harvard. He’s currently the director of the Grooversity network project and artistically co-directs twenty four drumming groups in the US, France, Germany, Bermuda and Canada.

We are so grateful for Marcus and all the percussionists at Grooversity for accompanying us on our long march toward freedom for people who have been wrongfully convicted.
Michelle Garcia Fresco

Michelle Garcia Fresco is a Dominican poet, performer, and teaching artist based in Boston. She is currently a Senior at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, double majoring in Creative Writing and Sociology.

Believing in the power of poetry as a medium for social justice, Garcia’s writing is often inspired by the women in her family, social and racial injustices in America, coping with loss and mental health, as well as her Dominican roots.

Her work has appeared in WBUR/The Artery, Tinderbox Poetry, and the Rising Phoenix. She is also the winner of Stirling Spoons “2020: Identity in America contest, chosen by Richard Blanco, former US Inaugural Poet and author.

On Wrongful Conviction Day 2021, Michelle performed her original work, “We the People,” a piece she created for Year Up.

Michelle is a creative writing teaching artist at Elevated Thought, an art and social justice organization based in Lawrence, MA. The group actively addresses forms of systemic injustice through creative youth development, beautification projects, public outreach, and paid opportunities for BIPOC creatives. The members of Elevated Thought believe that creativity supports the liberation of individuals and communities.

The New England Innocence Project is grateful to Michelle for sharing with us her powerful words about injustice, belonging, and believing in our own strength. Her voice inspires us to continue amplifying ours.
The inaugural MARCHING TOWARD FREEDOM AWARD recognizes a New England Innocence Project partner who has devoted tremendous time and heart to a wrongfully convicted person who is currently incarcerated. It recognizes the long march we must make together to fight injustice and help free an innocent person.

We are honored to present the inaugural 2021 MARCHING TOWARD FREEDOM AWARD to a pro bono team at Skadden:

Isaac Saidel-Goley
Nigel Tamton
Jonathan Casseus
Emily Kline
Esteban Flores

We are recognizing this outstanding pro bono team from Skadden for their ongoing and unending commitment to a person who has served nearly 37 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Working collaboratively with New England Innocence Project staff, a trustee, investigators, and experts, the Skadden team is marshaling scientific and third-party culprit evidence, as well as an honest accounting of the racial bias that infected the investigation and trial, to demonstrate how justice was not done in this case.
Isaac Saidel-Goley
Isaac represents domestic and international clients in a wide range of complex civil litigation. He has an active and robust pro bono practice, including leading the team currently partnering with the New England Innocence Project. Isaac has been described as “enthusiastic,” “incredibly competent,” and “a great leader.” “Working on [this] case has been one of the greatest privileges of my personal and professional life.”

Nigel Tamton
Nigel is a litigation associate, with a pro bono practice that includes both wrongful conviction and asylum matters. Before beginning his legal practice, Nigel was a kindergarten teacher. He was selected to participate in the Boston Bar Association’s 2020-21 Public Interest Leadership Program. Nigel has been described as “strategic,” “hilarious,” and “creative.” “Showing up to work each day, the most I can ask for is the opportunity to do something important and to do it to the best of my ability. This case - the importance, I think, speaks for itself.”

Jonathan Casseus
Jonathan specializes in complex commercial litigation in federal and state courts. He devotes a substantial amount of time to pro bono work and is actively involved in Skadden’s mentorship, recruitment, and DE&I initiatives. Jonathan has been described as “a fantastic attorney,” “invaluable to the team,” and “committed.” “This case gives me a sense of purpose and winning this award is meaningful for so many reasons.”

Emily Kline
Emily specializes in complex civil litigation proceedings and government investigations. She is active in recruitment initiatives and is a member of the firm’s Women’s Affinity Group. Emily has been described as “dedicated,” “determined,” and “very skillful.” “It’s incredibly meaningful to see this case moving forward and to see the impact that I could have in another individual's life.”

Esteban Flores
Esteban is a legal assistant at Skadden who has devoted significant pro bono hours to this case. He is originally from the South Texas border and plans to attend law school next year. He has been described as the “glue” for the team, keeping the team “organized” and “on track.” “What makes the award rewarding is not being awarded but knowing our contributions have been substantive enough to be recognized.”
“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”
Attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr., originally invoked by abolitionist Theodore Parker (Lexington, MA)

The ARC OF JUSTICE AWARD recognizes a New England Innocence Project partner who has demonstrated unparalleled commitment, tenacity, and courage to “bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice” for innocent people convicted of crimes they did not commit. The principle behind the Arc of Justice Award is that the arc only bends toward justice when people pull it there; it does not happen on its own.

2021 is a year to amplify the voices, stories, and work of our community, and this year, it is our distinct honor to present the 2021 ARC OF JUSTICE AWARD to a community of people:

Attorney Barbara Munro
Attorney Madeline Weaver Blanchette
Investigator John Nardizzi
Investigator Jill Vaglica

Together, this team worked to end the 41-year nightmare that James Watson and his family have endured when he was wrongfully convicted and sentenced to spend his life in prison. It was only after years of investigation and litigation that James Watson was officially exonerated on November 10, 2020.

Overturning wrongful convictions, and fighting against injustice, requires a movement. It takes a community of people who, when they come together, are an undeniable force for change.

Through this close partnership, Barb Munro, Maddy Blanchette, John Nardizzi, and Jill Vaglica all demonstrated fierce compassion and perseverance in pulling the arc of the moral universe toward justice and succeeding.

2020 Award Winners: E. Peter Parker, Joseph Savage and Ashley Drake of Goodwin Law, Chad Higgins of Bernstein Shur, Investigator Rick Hamilton of the Sprinkle team

2019 Inaugural Award Winners: Kirsten Mayer & the Cifizarri team of ROPES & GRAY

James Watson (third from the right) and his son, Don Juan Moses (center), celebrating with his legal team
Barbara Munro
Attorney Barb Munro has her own practice, where she specializes in criminal appeals and post-conviction litigation. Appointed by the Innocence Program of the Committee for Public Counsel Services, she began representing James Watson in 2018. Barb was described as a “natural leader.” “Having Jimmy as part of my family now, it’s a blessing. It’s the greatest gift I could ever have.”

Madeline Weaver Blanchette
Attorney Madeline Blanchette is a partner at Foster & Blanchette, a boutique law firm where she specializes in trial litigation in juvenile, probate, and family law cases as well as post-conviction litigation. “The true reward was being James Watson’s attorney.”

John Nardizzi
John Nardizzi is the founder and director of Nardizzi & Associates, Inc. John is an investigator, lawyer, and writer, and has been the primary investigator in several wrongful conviction cases. He has worked closely with the New England Innocence Project for the last two years. “So the day that James finally left prison was one of the best professional days I’ve ever experienced.”

Jill Vaglica
Jill Vaglica has been an investigator with Nardizzi & Associates, Inc., since 2017. She enjoys the uniqueness of every case and the opportunity to find the truth. “I feel proud to have made such a difference in someone’s life and to have helped bring someone back into the world who should have never been in prison in the first place.”
YOUR SUPPORT MAKES FREEDOM POSSIBLE

Fighting even one wrongful conviction requires thousands of hours and thousands of dollars, but we think every second and every penny is worth it.

Freedom is worth it.

Any gift you make tonight goes toward our efforts to free people from prison and reunite them with their families. They have missed a million special moments, let’s prevent them from missing any more. By working together, we are amplifying the voices of hundreds of wrongfully convicted individuals and giving them the support they need. JOIN US.

How to give online:

CLICK HERE TO DONATE

Contact us:

Email: jordan@newenglandinnocence.org
Mail: New England Innocence Project •
1035 Cambridge St., Suite 28A • Cambridge, MA 02141

Online: www.newenglandinnocence.org/voicesoftheinnocent
Sign up for NEIP’s E-newsletter
Receive NEIP news and updates, hear exoneree stories, and learn more about how you can help correct and prevent wrongful convictions – right in your inbox!

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Join the Running for Innocence Team
Next Race: Lexington Battlegreen 5K/10K, Nov. 7, 2021

Help end wrongful convictions by running or fundraising for the Running for Innocence team, which welcomes runners and non-runners of all ages. Funds raised by this event will help pay for the investigators and experts needed to free innocent people still behind bars for crimes they did not commit.

This is a wonderful opportunity to meet and welcome our exoneree team members, who every year inspire us to continue the important work of fighting wrongful convictions.

Click here for more information!
Saturday, July 17, 2021
Freedom Party at Kimball Farm

Saturday, October 2, 2021
Wrongful Conviction Day March in Boston
THANK YOU
TO OUR TALENTED PRODUCTION PARTNERS
The Exoneree Network

We want to recognize the enormous contributions of the Exoneree Network, led by Sean Ellis and Ray Champagne. Over the last year, the Exoneree Network has worked to support individuals and families in various ways, including: creating a “New Day Fund” to provide immediate financial support for people upon their release from prison; organizing a Technology Training Series; distributing laptops and phones; organizing support circles; showing up to court dates; testifying for policy changes; and so much more. The Exoneree Network continues to expand its reach and vision to support as many people and families as it possibly can.

It Takes A Community

Voices of the Innocent: Amplify! was made possible by so many in our community.

We are grateful to all the Staff and Trustees of the New England Innocence Project, without whom we would not be able to carry out our important mission.

We are especially thankful to Jordan Salvatoriello for making this event possible, using her unique skills to amplify these important stories of wrongful conviction.

Thank you to Representative Liz Miranda and Rahsaan Hall for being partners with us in this important liberation work.

Thank you Arnie Lucinda Stewart and Laura Carey for welcoming us into your homes to make the production of this event possible.

There are many people with whom we partner, and we could not possibly list all of them here. We deeply appreciate everyone who contributes to the freedom and support of those wrongfully convicted, including pro bono partners, co-counsel, amici, investigators, social workers, experts, volunteers, journalists, and donors.

In closing, we want to thank the families and loved ones of those wrongfully convicted who are still waiting for freedom. Thank you for trusting us to be in this fight with you.
Wrongful Convictions

Bernstein Shur proudly supports the New England Innocence Project

Voices of the Innocent AMPLIFY!

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We’re proud to support the important work of the New England Innocence Project.

Wishing you the greatest success!

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Foley Hoag is proud to support
New England Innocence Project
and congratulates the
2021 Voices of the Innocent
honorees.
Goodwin is proud to sponsor the New England Innocent Project’s Voices of the Innocent: Amplify!

We support this initiative’s commitment to making the voices of innocent individuals heard in the fight toward racial justice and meaningful change in the criminal legal system.

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Latham & Watkins is proud to support the New England Innocence Project’s Voices of the Innocent

We are honored to be part of this esteemed community dedicated to fighting injustice.

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ROPES & GRAY

is proud to sponsor the

New England Innocence Project

and the

Voice of the Innocent: Amplify! Virtual Event

We congratulate this year’s honorees:

■ ARC OF JUSTICE AWARD
  Barbara Munro
  Madeline Weaver Blanchette
  John Nardizzi
  Jill Vaglica

■ MARCHING TOWARD FREEDOM AWARD
  Isaac Saidel-Goley
  Nigel Tamton
  Jonathan Casseus
  Emily Kline
  Esteban Flores
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Arent Fox is a proud sponsor of the New England Innocence Project’s virtual Voices of the Innocent: Amplify! event.
Thank you

New England Innocence Project

for expanding justice!

THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO.

McDermott is proud to sponsor Voices of the Innocent: Amplify! and efforts by the New England Innocence Project to fight for those who have been wrongfully convicted. Thank you for your inspiring contributions to the legal profession.

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We are proud of our Skadden colleagues for receiving the Marching Toward Freedom Award and congratulate all of tonight’s honorees.
Applause & admiration

White & Case is proud to support New England Innocence Project and congratulations to the honorees.

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