NEW ENGLAND INNOCENCE PROJECT

Voices of the Innocent: Journey to Freedom

Thursday, November 3 | 7pm | Virtual Event

#VOICESOFTHEINNOCENT
Dear Friends,

When you think of our work, you may imagine that iconic moment when an innocent person walks out of prison, raising their hands in the air in celebration of their first breath of freedom after the injustice of a wrongful conviction. We live for moments like these, but we know they are only one small part of a long and arduous journey, one that starts years or even decades before and doesn’t end on the courthouse steps, but continues for a lifetime.

At this year’s event, Voices of the Innocent: Journey to Freedom, please join us as we share intimate stories from along the journey – from the crushing blow of a wrongful conviction and the struggle to maintain hope, to the long fight for justice and the trials and triumphs of rebuilding in freedom. We will also give you a rare inside look at the often emotional, sometimes painstaking, and always rewarding work we do at the New England Innocence Project in service of people who have been wrongfully convicted.

The journey to freedom is both a difficult and beautiful one. It is paved with obstacles and frustrations. It requires tremendous resources, both intellectual and financial. But, it is also transformative, filled with love, compassion, and dedication. For exonerees who are no longer in prison, it is a long road as they work to experience freedom for all it is.

We are committed to making the journey with people to freedom. We know that you too care deeply about justice. So, please join us on this journey, support this tremendous work, and witness the stories and wisdom shared at this special event. We can’t wait to experience it with you.

Sincerely

Radha Natarajan
Executive Director,
New England Innocence Project
About the New England Innocence Project

The New England Innocence Project is a social justice non-profit that works to correct and prevent wrongful convictions and fights injustice within the criminal legal system. We provide free forensic testing, investigation, experts, and an experienced legal team to exonerate the wrongfully convicted and bring them home to their loved ones. The Exoneree Network provides support for people rebuilding their lives in freedom after long-term incarceration. We use our expertise about wrongful convictions to provide education and advocate for legislative and judicial reforms to prevent future tragedies.

Each day, we receive letters from wrongfully convicted people who need our help. We currently have 83 cases with active investigations and nearly 350 open applications from people throughout New England.

There have been approximately 3,282 exonerations in the United States since 1989, stealing more than 28,150 years from innocent people and their families.
Featured Speakers

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.

Albert Brown
Albert was wrongfully convicted, alongside Jabir Pope, of a Boston murder and spent 38 years in prison. Albert was finally freed on June 9, 2022. He was granted a new trial on October 24, 2022, due to official misconduct, including the failure of prosecutors to turn over exculpatory information. He is still fighting to have the charges against him dropped.

Jason Carroll
Jason was 19 years old when he was convicted of a New Hampshire murder he did not commit. With no physical evidence connecting any of the suspects to the murder, the prosecution’s case hinged on coerced confessions by Jason and his co-defendant. Both later recanted, saying their statements were coerced by detectives and were based on information provided by police during hours of interrogation. Only Jason was convicted (in a second trial after his first jury could not reach a unanimous verdict) and he has now spent 33 years in prison fighting for his freedom.

Frederick Clay: Exoneration # 2081
Fred was 16 years old when he was arrested and charged as an adult with the murder of a cab driver in 1979. He was wrongfully convicted of the murder and spent 38 years in prison. Fred’s conviction resulted from a myriad of factors, including hypnotically-induced mistaken eyewitness testimony. He was finally freed and exonerated on August 8, 2017.
Featured Speakers

Sean Ellis: Exoneration # 2364

Sean is the Director of the Exoneree Network, an initiative he co-founded with Ray Champagne and Victor Rosario to support the practical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people who have faced long-term incarceration as they work to rebuild their lives in freedom. Arrested at the age of 19 for the murder of a police officer, Sean was wrongfully convicted at his third trial only after two juries could not reach a unanimous verdict. Sean was exonerated of all charges after serving nearly 22 years in prison. He is the subject of the Netflix docuseries Trial 4. Sean has also served as a Trustee of the New England Innocence Project.

Robert Foxworth: Exoneration # 2739

Robert was wrongfully convicted of a Boston murder and spent nearly 30 years in prison. His 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’s brother, Jason Carroll, was wrongfully convicted of a New Hampshire murder. Based on a coerced confession -- one of the leading causes of wrongful convictions -- Jason has now spent 33 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Jackie and Jason continue to fight for his freedom and full exoneration.

Joseph Lascaze

Joseph is the Smart Justice Campaign Manager for ACLU-NH. He developed a friendship with Jason Carroll when he was incarcerated at the age of 18 and spent 14 years in prison in New Hampshire. On September 9, 2022, Joseph was the recipient of the New Hampshire Rising Stars Changemaker of the Year Award.
Evenor Pineda
Evenor developed a friendship with Jason Carroll while he was serving an 18-year sentence at the New Hampshire State Prison in Concord. Evenor and Jason worked for the Recreation Department and were both participants in the Hobby Craft Program. Evenor works as a field sales representative for Prime Source Foods and resides in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Jabir Pope
Jabir was wrongfully convicted, alongside Albert Brown, of a Boston murder and spent 38 years in prison. He was granted a new trial based on official misconduct including the failure of prosecutors to turn over exculpatory information. Jabir was freed on April 6, 2022 and had all charges against him dropped on October 24, 2022.

Virginia Rosa
Virginia's husband, Thomas (Tommy) Rosa, was wrongfully convicted of a Boston murder and spent 34 years in prison. Tommy was freed from prison and reunited with his family on October 15, 2020. Tommy’s release was based in part on the strength of the DNA evidence obtained after his conviction and scientific evidence undermining the eyewitness identifications in the case. Virginia and Tommy continue to fight for his full exoneration.

Yesenia Valentin
Yesenia’s father, Pedro Valentin, was wrongfully convicted of a Boston murder in 1992. Pedro was released on November 13, 2020, while fighting to overturn his conviction. However, despite agreement between Pedro’s defense team and prosecutors that his sentence should be reduced and that he should remain free, a judge sent Pedro back to prison on May 20, 2022. Pedro has now spent 30 years in prison. Yesenia and Pedro continue to fight for his freedom.
Thank You To Our Community Conversation Participants

Host
Sean Ellis
Director, Exoneree Network
22 years in prison

Paul Robinson
53 years in prison

Jabir Pope
38 years in prison

Albert Brown
38 years in prison
The New England Innocence Project thanks the following artists for sharing their talent and supporting the fight against wrongful convictions.

A Revolutionary Press

A Revolutionary Press prints and disseminates Radical & Revolutionary ideals to impel the People to Creatively Act on their Right and their Duty to alter or abolish the Present Form of Government and institute a New and more Humane Form of Self Government. They design and print the old fashioned way, one l-e-t-t-e-r at a time and whenever one of the hand or foot powered printing presses completes a full Revolution, some sort of Art Happens!

The work of the Press is a collaborative effort of social justice artists who volunteer their time to design and print broadsides with messages of empowerment, peace and love.

The Press donates all income from the sale of this work to other nonprofits that perform the front line work for nonviolence and social justice.

John Vincent, a retired police officer, founded A Revolutionary Press in 2010 as a non profit letterpress print shop with a mission to print and promote Radical and Revolutionary Ideals.
The New England Innocence Project thanks the following artists for sharing their talent and supporting the fight against wrongful convictions.

A Revolutionary Press

The Team

**Anna Browdy** started making prints with A Revolutionary Press in high school in 2018, and has continued ever since! Besides carving linoleum blocks, she also enjoys making collages, zines, and various fiber arts. She is currently a student at UMass Amherst majoring in Social Justice and Advocacy Studies.

**Kenzie Hines** is an artist specializing in block printing and a vegetable farm worker in Vermont. Their printed works are at the intersection of anti-capitalist and abolitionist work and ecology, and demonstrate the power of our relationships when we care for each other. Their work reminds us of what we already know: we are connected to and responsible for each other and the world around us. Kenzie and John have been printing together since 2018.

**Annalise Johnson** from Minnesota, is now a Vermonter attending Middlebury college and studying environmental justice, architecture, and food studies. She collaborates with A Revolutionary Press in New Haven in the times in between. Annalise grew into a love for block printing as a kid, and was able to connect with John last winter and looks forward to more sheep-printing and letterpress-learning at the Press in years to come.

A Revolutionary Press is honored to have this opportunity to collaborate with the Exoneree Network and New England Innocence Project on this series of broadsides.
The New England Innocence Project thanks the following artists for sharing their talent and supporting the fight against wrongful convictions.

**JABIR POPE & ALBERT BROWN**
performing Albert Brown’s original song “I Cry Freedom,” written at MCI-Norfolk
“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.

2022 is a year to examine the entire journey to freedom, including the very difficult process of healing after the trauma of long-term wrongful imprisonment, and this year, it is our distinct honor to present the 2022 ARC OF JUSTICE Award to:

**KRISTIN DAME**

Kristin Dame is a social service advocate who is deeply devoted to supporting people in Massachusetts who face or have experienced incarceration. As an invaluable thought partner to the Exoneree Network, she supports people who have been wrongfully convicted in a myriad of ways, including helping people acquire an official ID, health insurance, and benefits; assisting with new technology to attend job interviews and support meetings; and providing emotional support as community members learn to navigate a new world. Exonerees describe her as “generous,” “caring,” “thoughtful,” “driven,” and “dedicated” and consider her a role model and mentor. She is truly an unsung hero and we are so thrilled to sing her praises this year.

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**2021 Award Winners:** Attorney Barbara Munro, Attorney Madeline Weaver Blanchette, Investigator John Nardizzi and Investigator Jill Vaglica of the Watson Team

**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 Award Winner:** Ropes & Gray of the Cifizzari team
In Loving Memory of
LAWYER JOHNSON
November 6, 1951 - March 29, 2022
10 years in prison

Lawyer Johnson was only 19 years old when he was convicted of murder and sentenced to die in the electric chair for a crime he did not commit. The case against him was entirely based on inconsistent witness testimony. Lawyer was the last person to be sentenced to death in Massachusetts before the Commonwealth abolished the death penalty.

During the 10 years Lawyer spent wrongfully incarcerated, he found hope in meditation, advocating for the rights of people in prison, and art. He was a skilled artist, creating detailed and deeply symbolic works. After being exonerated in 1982, Lawyer committed himself to opposing the death penalty and fighting racism. He promoted the Massachusetts erroneous conviction bill and was an active member of Witness to Innocence and Massachusetts Citizens Against the Death Penalty. He was a dedicated community activist and gave his time to educate children and ensure they know their rights.

On Navigating a New World

“Well, right now, I’m – you can say I’m still adjusting out here. I mean, like, one thing I wanna say and, you know, perhaps it would make people have more of a – clearer point of people leaving prison and coming out here, and that is that they think if someone that’s been incarcerated unjustly for 10 years and so many months can come out here and get a job and everything will be okay: it don’t go like that.”

- Lawyer Johnson
Shawn Drumgold was 23 years old when he was wrongfully convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Fourteen years later, in 2003, Shawn was exonerated after the case, built largely on eyewitness testimony and circumstantial evidence, fell apart.

He was a spiritual man who had a heart of gold. He had the ability to reach people in a deeply positive way. He enjoyed simple pleasures such as spending time with his children, grandkids, nieces, nephews, siblings, and a host of cousins and friends. At the time of his passing, he was working on his non-profit foundation, “Within Reasons,” to provide outreach to community kids.

On Getting Wrongfully Convicted

“I actually believed in the system. I said, “they’re gonna know it’s not me, based on the evidence presented towards them”. And I said, “Once we go through all this, I’ll be able to prove my innocence”. And when they told me natural life without the possibility of parole, I was like just pissed off, man.... I’m like, Yo, you got the wrong person. You know you got the wrong person! I had no way to help myself. I was totally helpless.”

- Shawn Drumgold
A deeply humble, acutely funny, and truly generous person, Ray was a rare joy and an inspiration to those who knew him. At age 19 he was wrongfully convicted for a prison murder he did not commit. In prison, he found his love for reading, taught himself law, became an activist, and began helping one person after another. Respected always for being straightforward, fair, and helpful, he became well-known as “the old guy.”

Ray spent 41 more years behind bars, relentlessly fighting for his freedom alongside his lawyer and close friend, Lisa Kavanaugh, Director of the CPCS Innocence Program. Ray came home to his wife, Molly, his daughter and his sister on February 18, 2020, immediately prior to the onset of the pandemic. Along with fellow exonerees Sean Ellis and Victor Rosario, Ray co-founded The Exoneree Network.

Each day, Ray committed himself to developing resources and healing spaces for the growing community of people freed from wrongful convictions. Ray spent the last 30 months of his life in the community, and several times in the past few months, Ray would say to Molly, “Today, I feel free.”

*On Being Released*

“What does freedom mean to me? Everything....
To be free now is – I think about it everyday.... I find joy in so many things that I never thought about before. Little tiny things. And it’s just so liberating. I can’t think of a better word for it. Freedom is breath.”

- Ray Champagne
In Loving Memory of
SHAWN TANNER
February 20, 1965 - September 13, 2022
34 years in prison

Shawn was a wonderful person who spent the majority of his life fighting to demonstrate his innocence from a wrongful murder conviction out of Bristol County. He was imprisoned for 34 years before he was released on medical parole, having received a terminal cancer diagnosis. He was out of prison for three months during which time he was treated with compassion by many staff at his nursing home, was able to eat foods he desperately missed in prison, and most importantly, was able to reconnect with family, including his beloved sister.

He was taken well before his time.

On Seeking Help

“It’s very hard to endure mentally something that you know you didn’t do. And then all of a sudden your life’s on the line because of it. You know that you need internal and external help. So you need support from people in the prison and people in the outside world to give you the strength to get by every day.”

- Shawn Tanner
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Make a Gift

JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

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

Thank you to A Revolutionary Press who has collaborated with us to create beautiful prints inspired by the exoneree community. Tonight, if you donate $500 or more, or pledge to be a monthly sustainer with a gift of $50/month or more, you will be entered to win 1 of 3 framed prints.
Join the Running for Innocence Team
November 6, 2022

This year’s race is dedicated to our dear friend and community member, Ray Champagne.

You can even get a t-shirt that says that you are “Running for Ray.”

This year, we are aiming to raise $10,000 to support the New England Innocence Project’s Running for Innocence fund. The funds raised by this event will help fund the investigation and expert assistance needed to free people after a wrongful conviction. They will also help us build a supportive community for the wrongfully convicted by enabling recent exonerees to attend the 2023 Innocence Network conference in Phoenix, Arizona!

Click here for more information!
The Exoneree Network, co-founded by Sean Ellis, Ray Champagne, and Victor Rosario, has made a tremendous impact on so many people since its creation. It has worked to support individuals and families in various ways, including: distributing a “New Day Fund” to provide immediate financial assistance for people upon their release from prison; distributing laptops and phones; providing housing assistance; facilitating support circles; organizing a toy drive; showing up to court dates; testifying for policy changes; and so much more. With the leadership of Director Sean Ellis, the Exoneree Network will expand its reach to support as many people as it can.

It Takes A Community

VOICES OF THE INNOCENT: JOURNEY TO FREEDOM 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 would like to give a special thank you to the Mosesian Center, who allowed us to film for Voices of the Innocent on their main stage.

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.
A GLIMPSE INTO NEIP’S JOURNEY

Celebrating Freedom

Freedom Party Picnic

Supporting those still imprisoned

The Exoneree Network

Wrongful Conviction Day March and Rally
#FreedomParty

Saturday, June 25, 2022
2nd Annual Celebration of Community & Freedom at Kimball Farm

Wrongful Conviction Day

Sunday, October 2, 2022
Wrongful Conviction Day March & Rally in Roxbury
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Congratulations
Kristin Dame
2022 Arc of Justice Award Winner

Thank you for your tremendous work helping those on their
Journey to Freedom

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Foley Hoag is once again delighted to partner with and support the New England innocence Project and its groundbreaking work to end wrongful convictions.
Goodwin is proud to sponsor the New England Innocent Project’s Voices of the Innocent: Journey to Freedom

We support their commitment to making the voices of innocent individuals heard in the fight toward change in the criminal legal system.

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Latham applauds the New England Innocence Project for its commitment to correcting and preventing wrongful convictions and ensuring justice within the criminal legal system for innocent people throughout New England.

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We are a proud sponsor of New England Innocence Project’s 2022 Voices of the Innocent: Journey to Freedom Event

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IN ITS FIGHT TO END WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS
THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO.

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We are proud to support the vital work of the

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New England Innocence Project and the Voices of the Innocent: Journey to Freedom virtual event.

We congratulate

2022 Arc of Justice Award honoree

Kristin Dame

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