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THE NATIONAL REGISTRY
OF EXONERATIONS

25,000 Years Lost

In June, the Registry marked a sobering milestone: The number of years exonerees were incarcerated for wrongful convictions surpassed 25,000 years.

To provide context to this figure, we published a [report](#) that dug deeper into what these years represent, underscoring that the harm can't be measured in years alone. With these wrongful incarcerations, opportunities vanish, families are shattered, futures are stolen.

Coincidentally, our report came as we recorded the case of [Anthony Mazza](#) of Boston, Massachusetts, who was wrongfully incarcerated for more than 47 years, the longest time served in prison by an exoneree. He was sentenced to life in prison for murder in 1973, released from prison in 2020, and exonerated in 2021, after a public-records search uncovered a witness statement that implicated the state's key witness as the perpetrator.

Mazza's long road to freedom received little coverage. And while we celebrate his release, it's important not to lose sight of all those lost years.

In a column in the [Crime Report](#), Registry co-founder Sam Gross and researcher Ken Otterbourg wrote: "We must pay attention when significant new evidence of innocence is presented, not ignore it because the case is closed. And the cases of prisoners who might be innocent should go to the front of the line for decision, not the back, so those who are innocent are freed before they reach old age or die. Don't confuse what happened to Anthony Mazza with justice. It's not."

Read more in our recent report on the 25,000 years lost to wrongful convictions.

15 Exonerations Posted in June

Including Anthony Mazza, we published 15 exonerations in June. Browse our [recently](#)

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In 2000, [Gary Johnson](#), [Rohan Bolt](#) and [George Bell](#) were each sentenced to lengthy prison sentences for a double murder in Queens, New York. They were exonerated in 2021 because evidence pointing to the true perpetrators was concealed from the defense at trial.

[Rene Vriones](#) was placed on probation after pleading guilty in 1996 to drug possession in Los Angeles, California. He was exonerated in 2000 after the officer involved in his arrest said he had planted drugs on Vriones.

[Oscar Ochoa](#) served two years in prison after pleading guilty in 1997 to possession of cocaine. He was exonerated in 2000 after an officer involved in his arrest recanted and evidence of corruption in the Los Angeles Police Department's Rampart division undermined the credibility of the conviction.

In 2009, [Steven Mallet](#) pled guilty to drug possession in Houston, Texas. He was exonerated in 2021, based on evidence that the arresting police officer framed him and his brother, Otis Mallet Jr., who was exonerated in 2020.

In 2013, [Patrick Willis](#) of Oakland, California was sentenced to life in prison for the 1992 murders of two women. His conviction was vacated in 2019 and the charges dismissed in 2021 after new evidence raised doubts about the prosecution's timeline.

In 2019, [Donald Gay](#) was sentenced to 15 years in prison after pleading guilty to failing to register as a sex offender in Houston, Texas. He was exonerated in 2021 based on records showing he was not required to register.

In 2012, [Lydell Grant](#) was sentenced to life in prison in Houston, Texas for murder. He was exonerated in 2021 after DNA tests on fingernail scrapings of the victim identified the real killer.

[Angel Hernandez](#) was convicted of murder in December 2010 in Springfield, Massachusetts based on perjured testimony. He was granted a new trial after a key witness recanted his testimony, and he was acquitted at a retrial in 2021.

[Gilbert Poole Jr.](#), formerly of Pontiac, Michigan, was sentenced in 1989 to life in prison for murder. He was exonerated in 2021 after the bitemark evidence used to convict him was discredited and new DNA testing excluded him from forensic evidence found at the crime scene.

[Kaliegh Smith](#) of New Orleans, Louisiana, was sentenced to life in prison for second-degree murder in 2010. He was exonerated in 2021 after DNA testing on the victim's shirt excluded Smith as a contributor and evidence not disclosed by prosecutors at his trial pointed to another man as the likely shooter.

[Felipe Ordonez](#) of Los Angeles, California, pled guilty to drug possession in 1997. He was exonerated in 2000, after the officer involved in his arrest said he had not actually seen a drug transaction between Ordonez and another man.

[Carlos E. Romero](#) of Los Angeles, California, pled guilty to drug possession in 1995 and received a six-month jail sentence. He was exonerated in 2000 after the officer who arrested him said the drugs were found near Romero but not in his possession.

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[defendants](#) in Richmond, Virginia, and dismissed their gun and drug charges after federal officials raised questions about whether a police officer had falsified information on search warrants.

Judges in 2020 vacated at least [11 convictions](#) for driving while intoxicated and dismissed charges in those cases after the Michigan State Police said that technicians were failing to properly inspect equipment used to measure blood-alcohol content.

Judges in Orange County Superior Court vacated the convictions of [53 defendants](#) and dismissed their charges in 2020 after an audit of the Orange County, California, sheriff's office revealed that deputies failed to book evidence in a manner characterized by accountability, consistency, and reliability.

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