

2015

The National Registry
of Exonerations

a RECORD year of
(UN)making
murderers

“We’re entranced with a documentary about one possible innocence case in Wisconsin, but 58 men and women have actually been exonerated of homicide convictions in 2015.”

-Samuel Gross, editor of the National Registry of Exonerations

58

innocent people
were **exonerated**



of homicide
in 2015

in total they spent
969 years
wrongfully behind bars.



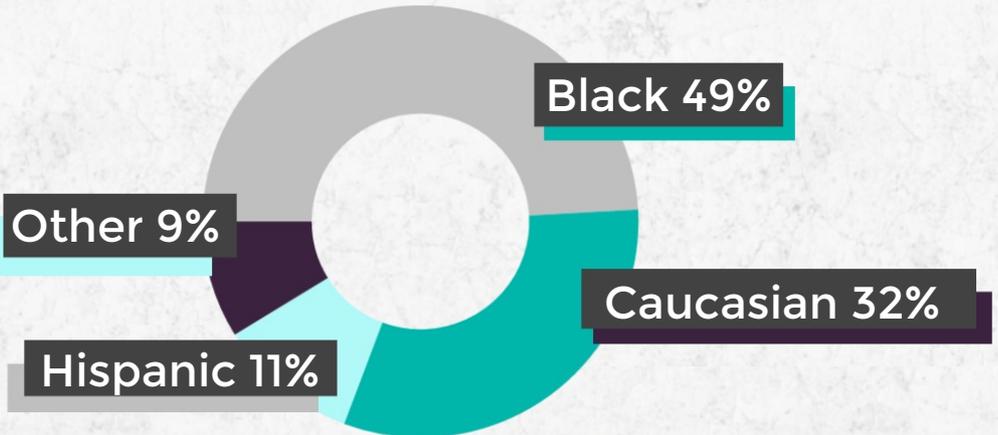
that's long enough to
TIME TRAVEL
back to the signing of the
Declaration of Independence

That's MORE than any other year.

#1

Who are the Unmade murderers from 2015?

race



state



Roll the cursor over the map to see the number of 2015 homicide exonerations from each state.

(Light gray states had none)

sentence

5 were sentenced to death.



19 received life sentences.

The rest were given sentences up to 120 years.

how did 58 innocent people get convicted of homicide?

There are LOTS of reasons. Here

were some of the big ones in 2015.



38% falsely confessed

Most were under 18 or suffered from mental illness or intellectual disability, or both.



Take Bobby Johnson, for example:

Bobby, a barely-literate 16-year-old with an IQ of 69, confessed after detectives (falsely) told him that physical evidence tied him to a murder and that he would face the death penalty if convicted (also a lie). They promised him probation if he confessed. He did. He was exonerated 9 years later in 2015, when it was discovered that police concealed evidence identifying the real killer.

76% official misconduct

In Debra Milke's case:

She was sentenced to death for conspiring with the 2 men who murdered her 4-yr-old son. The only substantial evidence against her was a confession. The Detective was told to record the interrogation—he did not. He told the jury that she flashed her breasts, offered him sex, and confessed. She denied it all. She was exonerated in 2015 after her attorneys discovered that the state had concealed the detective's long history of lying about confessions.



3/4 of 2015 homicide exonerations included police or prosecutor misconduct.

14% pled guilty

WHY do innocent people plead guilty to murder??

Every 2015 guilty-plea homicide exoneree had already falsely confessed, and most had official misconduct in their cases.



This is Shawn Whirl's story:

Shawn pled guilty to murder to avoid facing the death penalty. He had falsely confessed. He was exonerated in 2015 after a state commission set up to review cases where Chicago police tortured suspects, found that Shawn had been tortured into confessing, and his lawyers presented evidence that someone else was the true killer.

26% junk science

15 homicide exonerations in

For Raymond Mora:

Raymond Mora, William Vasquez and Amaury Villalobo were convicted of setting a fire that killed a mother and five children. A fire marshal testified that the fire was arson and the building's owner testified that she saw the defendants leave right before the fire exploded. All 3 were exonerated in 2015 after new fire analysis showed that the the fire marshal's conclusions were unsupportable, and an admission from the building's owner that she lied about seeing them. Two were released. Raymond passed away while in prison.



2015 had mistaken ballistics, faulty fire science, false toxicology reports, inaccurate hair matching and more.

*all names link to full case narratives

how did they get exonerated?

in
26% DNA

tests helped clear the exoneree

Floyd Bledsoe was convicted of raping and murdering his 14 year old sister-in law. His post-conviction lawyers found a secret signed agreement between the prosecutor and sheriff not to test the rape kit. After 14 years in prison the rape kit was tested - and the DNA matched to his brother. He was exonerated in 2015.

Christopher Abernathy, learning disabled 18 year old, was convicted of rape and murder after an acquaintance said he had confessed. No physical evidence tied him to the crime. Fifteen years later, the acquaintance admitted making up the confession because police promised him lenient treatment on pending charges and gave him \$300. Christopher was exonerated in 2015.

in
53% recantations

from witnesses played a role

in
21% Conviction Integrity Units

in prosecutors' offices assisted

Joel Fowler was convicted of shooting a Bloods gang member. Five witnesses viewed a lineup. Four said Joel wasn't the shooter, one woman said he was. The jury believed her. In 2015 the Brooklyn CIU reinvestigated the case and discovered that the police knew at the time that the woman had made previous false identifications. The prosecution dismissed the charges in 2015.

* 24 prosecutor's offices have started "CIUs" to

Ruddy Quezada was convicted of a drive-by shooting based on an eyewitness identification. Eight years later the witness admitted he falsely accused Ruddy because he believed Ruddy was spreading rumors about him. The next year a contract killer serving multiple life sentences confessed to the shooting to federal agents. It took 13 more years before Ruddy was exonerated in 2015.

in
**53% evidence about
the real criminal
was discovered**

"There is a growing awareness that false convictions are a substantial, widespread and tragic problem. The popularity of the recent Netflix documentary "Making a Murderer" reflects and contributes to that process. Increasingly, Americans realize that we convict innocent people of crimes on a regular basis. How many? We don't know. "

-Samuel Cross, editor of the National Registry of Exonerations

Want more information?

Check out our full report at
<http://bit.ly/1SkFxRO>

The National Registry of Exonerations



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