



## Looking back, looking ahead

Happy New Year. December was a busy month at the Registry.

We published 16 exonerations, including the extraordinary case of [Sandra Hemme](#), who was first convicted in 1981 of a murder in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Hemme was exonerated in 2024 after her attorneys presented evidence that Hemme's confession was false and that the state had failed to disclose evidence pointing to an alternate suspect. She served more than 43 years in prison, the longest amount of time for an exonerated woman in U.S. history.



*Sandra Hemme*

*(Photo: HR Biggs/The Kansas City Star)*

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During 2024, we added 191 cases to our main Registry, including 135 exonerations that occurred in 2024 and 56 from previous years. We are still researching 2024 exonerations, so that number of 2024 exonerations will increase. We'll have more information about 2024 in April, when we publish our annual report.

However, 2025 promises to be an even bigger year at the Registry. We are launching a new website, and the inaugural year of our subscription service—a program offering enhanced research services to our subscribers in the Innocence Network and beyond. We are breaking ground on a research project that has been years in the making: an in-depth examination of whether true perpetrators are identified and prosecuted after exonerations.

We are especially grateful for the generous support from our donors—without whom our work would not be possible. We are excited about the year ahead!

### **We published 15 other exonerations in December.**

In 1989, [David Kruger](#) was sentenced to 25 years in prison for murder in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2024 based on evidence that Officer Reynaldo Guevara coerced witnesses to falsely implicate Kruger.

In 2000, [Andrew Roark](#), of DeSoto, Texas, was convicted of injury to a child by violent shaking and sentenced to 35 years in prison. He was exonerated in 2024, after research discredited the state's theory that the child's injuries were due to Shaken Baby Syndrome.

In 2020, [Jose Yanez](#) was sentenced to 15 years in prison for a stabbing that killed a man in Rock Island, Illinois. In 2022, an appeals court vacated his conviction and dismissed the case based on insufficient evidence. Yanez, who said he acted in self-defense, was awarded a certificate of innocence in September 2024.

[Edgar Barrientos-Quintana](#) was convicted in 2009 of murder in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was exonerated in 2024 after a re-investigation substantiated his alibi that he was not at the crime scene at the time of the shooting.

In 1993, [Eric Misch](#) was sentenced to 20 years to life in prison for a murder in Toledo, Ohio when he was 16 years old. He was exonerated in 2024 based on newly discovered evidence pointing to other suspects as the real killers.

In 2007, [Raheem Collins](#) was sentenced to 52 1/2 to 125 years in prison for attempted murder, aggravated assault, and conspiracy to commit murder for a shooting that left a 6-year-old boy paralyzed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was exonerated in 2024 based on alibi witnesses who had not been called to testify, the recantation of the sole eyewitness to identify him, and previously undisclosed police records naming another man as the gunman.

[Isaac Aryee](#), of Adams County, Colorado, was convicted in 2011 of sexual assault of a 15-year-old girl. He was granted a new trial in 2019, and his case was dismissed in 2020 after he produced evidence indicating that the girl was actually 19 years old.

In 2018, [Cesar Torres](#) was sentenced to 71 years in prison for a shooting that killed one man and wounded two others in Chicago, Illinois. He was granted a new trial and acquitted in 2023 based on evidence that a large scar on the back of his head excluded him as the gunman.

In 2011, [Kimberly Hanzlik](#) was convicted of second-degree murder for her involvement in a shooting in the Bronx, New York. She was exonerated in 2024, based on new evidence that underscored inconsistencies in the state's two main witnesses' testimony.

In 2023, [Curtis Davis](#) was sentenced to probation after pleading guilty to possession of methamphetamine in Dallas County, Texas. He was exonerated in 2024 based on evidence that his brother was the real criminal and had stolen Davis's identity.

In 1998, [Joseph Bennett](#) was sentenced to life in prison for a fatal shooting at a nightclub in the

Mattapan neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. He was exonerated in 2024 based on witnesses who identified the real gunman and said Bennett had left the club by the time of the shooting, as well as evidence that the prosecution's firearms analyst overstated his conclusions.

In 2003, [Alan Sampson](#) was sentenced to four years in prison after he was convicted of attempting to steal more than \$500 worth of items from a parked car in Rhode Island. In 2024, a Superior Court Judge declared Sampson factually innocent and awarded him more than \$160,000 in compensation.

In 2015, [Joshua Burns](#) was sentenced to a year in jail for child abuse after medical experts blamed his daughter's physical ailments on abusive head trauma. He was exonerated in 2024 based on expert testimony that the prosecution's experts had mistakenly attributed retinal hemorrhages and subdural bleeding to child abuse.

In 2019, [Carlos Alvarez Jr.](#) was sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison after he was convicted of possession of cocaine with intent to distribute. The conviction was vacated, and the case was dismissed in 2019 based on evidence that the arresting police officer had testified falsely about evidence in the case.

In 2021, [Scott Balotin](#) was convicted of conspiring to commit health care fraud and money laundering in Jacksonville, Florida. The conviction was vacated, and the case was dismissed in 2024 because the prosecution had failed to disclose impeachment evidence involving two of its cooperating witnesses.

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**With your support, the National Registry of Exonerations can protect the innocent by preventing false convictions.**

**We find the stories.** We painstakingly search for every false conviction in the United States that is overturned and meets our criteria for exoneration. We gather the information, study the cases, and code the data, fueling the most comprehensive public database of exonerations that exists.

**We tell the stories.** One by one, we write and share the human stories behind each individual exoneration. We bear witness to these incredible injustices to ensure that they are remembered.

**And we count the stories.** Thousands of exonerees. Tens of thousands of years lost to wrongful incarceration. Untold costs paid by our communities. This independent collection of data allows us to understand how false convictions occur and prevent them from happening in the future.

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