



The Trials of Robert Roberson

Last month, Robert Roberson came within a day of being executed in Texas for the 2003 murder of his daughter. Only through the extraordinary efforts of the Texas legislature was the execution postponed. Roberson would have been the first person in the United States to be executed for murder based on a medical diagnosis that the victim died due to Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) is a controversial diagnosis. It's not that child abuse doesn't exist or that shaking a baby is safe; it's that other medical conditions can cause the same injuries.

Roberson's supporters say his daughter was chronically ill, with a history of head injuries and respiratory problems. Because a doctor at the hospital said the girl died from SBS, investigators viewed Roberson as a prime suspect rather than a grieving father. They interpreted his flat affect as coldness and a lack of sympathy. His attorneys say Roberson is on the autism spectrum and processes emotions differently.

Roberson came within a day of being executed, but the execution was stayed after Roberson was subpoenaed to appear before a legislative committee.

The Registry lists [34 exonerations](#) where defendants were wrongfully convicted of crimes based on flawed SBS evidence. As the saga of Roberson's case unfolded in the media, our data became a core part of the debate.

Roberson remains on Death Row. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed his conviction in October, and it is quite possible his execution will proceed in the months to come. It's worth noting that also in October the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals granted a new trial to Andrew Roark, who was convicted in 2000 of murder based on SBS evidence.



Robert Roberson
(Photo: Texas Tribune)

We published 14 exonerations in October.

Benjamin Spencer, of Dallas, Texas, was convicted of murder in 1987. He received a new trial and was convicted of aggravated robbery in 1988. He was exonerated in 2024, after two witnesses recanted and Spencer's legal team discovered evidence undermining the testimony of the state's key witness.

Fernando Almanza, of Pinal County, Arizona, was convicted in 2013 of sexual conduct with a minor. He received a new trial because of prosecutorial misconduct and ineffective assistance of counsel in 2023 and was acquitted at a retrial in 2024.

In 2000, Robert Bintz and his brother, David, were sentenced to life in prison without parole for the 1987 abduction and murder of a bartender in Green Bay, Wisconsin. They were exonerated in 2024 based on DNA testing and genetic genealogy that identified the real killer.

In 2012, Thomas Shafer was sentenced to probation after pleading guilty to stealing his mother's diamond engagement ring in Broome County, New York. He was exonerated in 2024 after his mother told authorities the ring had never been stolen. In fact, she had misplaced it.

In 2019, Alexander Villa was convicted of murder for the killing of an off-duty Chicago police officer during the robbery of a convenience store in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2024 based on cell phone records concealed by the prosecution that showed Villa was elsewhere at the time of the crime.

In 1985, Kelvin Fuller was sentenced to 18 years to life in prison for two robberies and an abduction and rape in West Covina, California. He was exonerated of the abduction and rape in 2024 after the real criminal admitted his involvement and said Fuller was not involved. .

In 2000, Jon-Adrian "JJ" Velazquez was convicted of second-degree murder and robbery in New York City and sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. He was exonerated in 2024, after several witnesses recanted their testimony and DNA testing excluded him from genetic material left at the crime scene.

In 1987, Keith Roberts was sentenced to 18 years to life in prison for a murder in Brooklyn, New York. He was exonerated in 2024 by evidence showing that the state's key witness falsely testified that he saw Roberts commit the crime.

Antonio Mallett, of the Bronx, New York, was convicted in 1999 of second-degree murder. He was exonerated in 2024 after the sole eyewitness recanted.

In November 1960, Black activist Clyde Kennard was convicted of burglary in Forrest County, Mississippi, and sentenced to seven years in prison. In May 2006, nearly 40 years later, Kennard, who had died in 1963, was exonerated after his co-defendant admitted he falsely implicated Kennard after being threatened by police.

In 1995, Ronald Taylor was sentenced to 80 years in prison for the murder of a bodega owner in New Haven, Connecticut. His co-defendant, George Gould, was exonerated in February 2024 based on recantations by two witnesses and evidence pointing to the victim's son as the real killer. Last month, Taylor, who had died in 2011, was posthumously exonerated.

Doris Martin, of Houston, Texas, pled guilty to two drug offenses in 2011. She was exonerated in 2024 after the officer involved in her arrest was tied to misconduct in other cases.

Byron Prophet, of Houston, Texas, was convicted of a drug offense in 2008 and sentenced to 16 years in prison. He was exonerated in 2024 after the officer involved in his arrest was tied to misconduct in other cases.

SUPPORT OUR WORK



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.



Our mailing address is:

National Registry of Exonerations Foundation

1140 Abbott Rd #154

East Lansing MI 48826

[Add us to your address book](#)

11/14/24, 3:00 PM

The Trials of Robert Roberson

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

The National Registry of Exonerations · 5544 Social & Behavioral Sciences Gateway · University Of California Irvine · Irvine, CA 92697-7090 ·
USA