



## Bunter Marks and a Wrongful Conviction

False and misleading forensic evidence is a contributing factor in nearly 30 percent of all known exonerations. For murder cases, it's 33 percent.

Forensic and expert evidence covers a lot of ground, and we apply this term broadly. It includes DNA, fingerprint, and pathology reports, of course, but also extends to the testimony of toolmark analysts, gang experts, entomologists, social scientists, linguists, and canine handlers, among others.

Even with more than 1,000 exonerations that include false and misleading forensic evidence, we are still adding new examples where this type of evidence contributed to a wrongful conviction.

Last month, we published the exoneration of [Tracy Jordan](#), who was convicted of murder in 2006 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Part of the state's case against Jordan included evidence and testimony about bunter marks, which are the small marks stamped on shell casings. An expert witness testified that ammunition found in a gun belonging to Jordan's wife had bunter marks similar to shell casings found at the crime scene.

These sorts of comparisons have been discredited; in 2010, the FBI and other groups cautioned against using bunter marks for the purpose of identifying firearm evidence.

Jordan's wrongful conviction had other significant problems, but it's the first exoneration that includes bunter marks. Are there others like it out there? We don't know. But one wrongful conviction is one too many.



*Tracy Jordan, and his son, Tracy Jr.  
(Photo: Courtesy of Phillips Black)*

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We published 12 other exonerations in November.

In 2013, [Duane Williams](#) was convicted of murder and arson after two people died in a house fire in Detroit, Michigan. He was exonerated in 2024, when Williams's appellate attorneys found that the arson investigator's report had been altered to cover up evidence showing the fire might have started accidentally.

In 2002, [Lavone Hill](#) was sentenced to life in prison for a double murder in Detroit, Michigan. He was exonerated in 2024 based on evidence that another man committed the crime, new witnesses who said Hill was not the gunman, and the prosecution's failure to disclose that the lead detective had been suspended at the time he testified.

[Katina Barley](#), of Houston, Texas, pled guilty to a drug offense in 2018. She was exonerated in 2024 after the officer involved in her arrest was tied to misconduct in other cases.

In 1987, [Billy Holton](#) was sentenced to life in prison for a sexual assault of a woman in Duval

County, Florida. He was exonerated in 2024 based on DNA testing that implicated the prosecution's key witness as the rapist.

In 2002, [David Taylor](#) was convicted of 13 counts of robbery and related charges in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was exonerated in 2024 after another man confessed that he, not Taylor, had participated in the crime. Taylor's co-defendant, Keith Graves, was exonerated earlier in 2024.

In 2009, [Joseph Jackson](#) pled guilty in federal court to a weapons violation. He was exonerated in 2010, after the officers involved in his case were charged with wide-ranging misconduct.

In 2019, [Elon Wilson](#) pled guilty to weapons and drug possession in Fairfax County, Virginia. He was exonerated in 2021, after an investigation into the arresting officer showed that the officer lied about the basis for the traffic stop that led to Wilson's arrest.

In 1978, [Ricky Webb](#) was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the rape and murder of a 29-year-old woman in Gibson County, Tennessee. He was exonerated in 2024 based on the discovery of exculpatory evidence that had not been disclosed, including statements from his nephew, Carl, who admitted he committed the crime alone.

[Jameel McGee](#), of Benton Harbor, Michigan, was convicted in 2006 in federal court of drug possession with intent to distribute. He was exonerated in 2009, after an officer involved in his arrest was convicted on drug charges tied to more extensive misconduct.

In 1992, [Mark Crotts](#) was sentenced to life in prison without parole for a double murder in Alamance County, North Carolina. He was acquitted at a retrial in 1997 after DNA testing excluded him as the source of blood under one victim's fingernails.

In 2012, [Caroline Ashby](#) was sentenced to 10 years to life in prison in Utah County, Utah after she was convicted of sexually abusing her seven-year-old son. She was exonerated in 2023 after her son said that he had lied and that no abuse had occurred.

In 2019, [Tavon Tull](#) was convicted of rape and other crimes involving a 2-year-old girl in Salisbury, Maryland. He was exonerated in 2024 after experts reviewed the evidence in his case and said healthcare workers had incorrectly attributed the girl's injuries to abuse.

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