



A Marker Of Freedom

March was a busy month at the Registry. First, we released our 2023 annual report, which you can read [here](#). It provides an overview of the year in exonerations. We entered 153 exonerations from 2023, along with 54 exonerations that occurred in previous years.

The report also examines two important issues: years lost to wrongful convictions and compensation paid to wrongfully convicted individuals. According to our data, the average number of years lost in 2023 was the highest in the Registry's history, and compensation to exonerees now exceeds \$4 billion, nearly double the amount from 2019.

We presented highlights of the report last month at the annual Innocence Network Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, where we heard repeatedly about how important the Registry's data and detailed summaries are to the innocence movement.

The best part of the conference was meeting exonerees and their families. Each exoneree has a number in the Registry denoting either when their case was entered into our database, or, for the first 900 entries, when their exoneration took place. A few years back, we learned that this number carried special significance as a marker of freedom. When exonerees stopped by our table at the conference, we gave them a Registry sticker with their exoneration number. The word got around to attendees, and requests continued even after the conference ended.

Just the other day, an exoneree emailed, asking for his number. We told him, and he responded: "Thank you. All these years I never knew that. I was hearing my brothers and sister talking about their number at the conference in NOLA last week and didn't get a chance to stop by the table to ask."

We also published 12 exonerations in March.

In 1990, [Charles Staples III](#) was sentenced to 30 years in prison after he was convicted of sexually assaulting his eight-year-old stepdaughter in Connecticut. He was granted a full pardon in 2020 after his stepdaughter recanted and said her accusation was false.

[Timothy Evans](#) was sentenced to 45 years in prison in 2009 for a 1993 murder in Durham, North Carolina. He was exonerated in 2024 after one of the state's main witnesses, a co-defendant who was Evans's cousin, recanted his testimony implicating Evans.

In 2006, [Julius Cerdas Jr.](#) was sentenced to 18 months in prison after pleading guilty to conspiring to distribute marijuana. He was exonerated in 2024 based on evidence that he had been framed by a corrupt federal drug enforcement agent.

In 2006, [Jofama Coleman](#) was sentenced to 25 years to life after he was convicted of murder in Los Angeles, California. In 2007, [Abel Soto](#) was sentenced to 72 years and eight months in prison for his alleged involvement in the same murder. They were exonerated in 2024 based on evidence pointing to two other men as the true perpetrators.

In 1991, [Adolfo Rosario](#) was sentenced to 57 years in prison for a murder in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2022 based on evidence that a street-gang member testified falsely against him and that his defense attorney had a conflict of interest because he was simultaneously representing the lead detective, Reynaldo Guevara, who had a lengthy history of coercing false statements from witnesses and defendants.

In 1995, [Daniel Gwynn](#) was convicted and sentenced to death for murder and arson in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was exonerated in 2024, after the state acknowledged it had failed to disclose substantial exculpatory evidence pointing to another suspect.

In 2015, [Keyon Paylor](#) pled guilty to weapons possession in Baltimore, Maryland. He was exonerated in 2024, several years after an officer involved in his arrest was convicted in federal court on misconduct charges.

[Cedric Woods](#) pled guilty to drug possession in Houston, Texas, in 2007. He was exonerated in 2024, more than 15 years after a police laboratory reported that the substance said to be found on Woods tested negative for the presence of controlled substances.

In 2001, [Ronald Velasquez Jr.](#) and [Abraham Villalobos](#) were convicted of a murder in Downey, California. They were exonerated in 2024, after a re-investigation found that Velasquez had been a bystander to the shooting and Villalobos was never there, as he had said all along.

In 1991, [Ronald Johnson](#) was sentenced to life in prison without parole for a murder in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was exonerated in 2024 based on the failure of police to disclose a tip about an alternate suspect and evidence that two prosecution witnesses initially said Johnson was not involved in the crime.

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.

SUPPORT OUR WORK



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

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