



The Next Generation

Last month, members of the Registry's team finished teaching a course at University of California, Irvine with the unwieldy name of "Building, Analyzing, and Sustaining a Digital Media Archive." The heart of this service learning course was teaching students how to research and write cases for publication in the Registry.

These were real cases, not practice ones, which had been found by our researchers in the months preceding the class, and set aside after a determination that these exonerations would provide students with a challenging experience.

For the first half of the course, the entire class—roughly 40 students—learned about the Registry's methodologies and researched the exoneration of Joseph Zamora, who was wrongfully convicted in 2019 of two counts of assault, after a violent confrontation with police officers in Moses Lake, Washington. (One officer said he hurt his hand hitting Zamora in the head.) He was exonerated in 2023, after the Washington Supreme Court found that racially charged comments the prosecutor made during jury selection violated Zamora's right to a fair trial.

Working in teams of five—supervised by Professor Simon Cole, Researchers Maurice Possley and Ken Otterbourg, and Learning Assistant Dulce Perez Zavala—the students researched the cases and wrote summaries of the Zamora case. Their collective work was combined into a [final version](#) that was published last month.

In the course's second half, each group worked on its own case, which required the students to dig deep into documents and wrestle with complicated concepts about our system of criminal justice. In the end, most groups were able to successfully produce a summary that was also published last month. We've noted the student-authored cases below. We're proud of the work these students did. It is a powerful reminder that the Registry is an *academic* research organization. Teaching, in all its forms, is at the heart of what we do.

We published 24 other exonerations in June.

In 1993, [Gerald Reed](#) was sentenced to life in prison without parole for a double murder in Chicago, Illinois. He was granted a new trial based on evidence that his false confession was the product of physical abuse by detectives. He was acquitted at the retrial in May 2024.

In 2010, [Marcus Sapp](#) was sentenced to life in prison for a murder and assault in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was exonerated in 2024 based on evidence pointing to another suspect that was not disclosed by the police.

In 2018, [Willie Billinger](#) was sentenced to 60 years in prison for a double murder in Baltimore, Maryland. He was granted a new trial, and the charges were dismissed in 2024 because the prosecution had failed to disclose that the lead detective had been disciplined in the past for filing a false report.

In 2018, [Matthew Chavez](#) was sentenced to 23 1/2 years in prison for the fatal shooting of a man at an ATM in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He was granted a new trial and was acquitted at a retrial in 2024 based on evidence that Chavez acted in self-defense.

In 2007, [David Powell](#) was convicted of assaulting his girlfriend and was sentenced to 70 months in prison in Calvert County, Oregon. His conviction was vacated, and the case was dismissed in 2020 based on evidence that his defense attorney had provided an inadequate legal defense. (UCI)

In 1996, [Steven Carrington](#) was convicted of second-degree murder and robbery in Brooklyn, New York. He was exonerated in 2024, after new evidence supported Carrington's claim that the state's eyewitness misidentified him at trial and another man was the actual criminal.

[Gabriel Lugo](#) was convicted in 2009 of reckless homicide after a shooting outside a bar in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was exonerated in 2023, after a witness recanted and a new witness said that Lugo was not present at the time of the crime. (UCI)

In 2010, [Derrico Searcy](#) was sentenced to 40 to 60 years in prison for a shooting in Detroit, Michigan that killed one person and wounded another. His co-defendant, [Darrell Ewing](#), was sentenced to life in prison. The two men were exonerated in 2024 after the real gunman admitted to the crime. (UCI)

[Carl Morton](#) was convicted in 2009 of assault on a corrections officer in the District of Columbia jail. He was exonerated in 2014, after an appellate court ruled that prosecutors failed to disclose evidence impeaching a corrections officer who identified Morton from video footage. (UCI)

[Derek Harris](#), of Houston, Texas, pled guilty to a drug offense in 2008. He was exonerated in 2024 after the officer involved in his arrest was tied to misconduct in other cases.

In 2019, [Rudolph Amador](#) was sentenced to three years in prison for sexually molesting an 11-year-old girl in Union County, New Mexico. In 2024, his conviction was vacated, and the case was dismissed by the New Mexico Supreme Court due to prosecutorial misconduct. (UCI)

In 2002, [Keith Graves](#) 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 Graves, had participated in the crime.

In 2005, 15-year-old [London Weekly](#) was sentenced to probation after pleading guilty to possession of cocaine in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2024 based on evidence that he had been framed by corrupt police officers.

In 1997, [Chad Marcum](#) was sentenced to 71 years in prison for the murder of one man and the attempted murder of another in Madison County, Indiana. He was exonerated in 2011 based on evidence that the injuries to the victims resulted from a vehicle crash. (UCI)

In 2019, [Derec Keefer](#) was sentenced to probation in Washington County, Oregon after he pled guilty to driving with a license that had been suspended in 2008. He was exonerated in 2023 after officials said that his driving privileges had been restored, but hadn't been properly updated because of a record-keeping glitch.

In 2011, [Octavius Williams](#) was convicted of attempted murder and related crimes in Cleveland, Ohio. He was exonerated in 2024 after his brother gave several statements that claimed responsibility for the shooting.

In 2011, [Jacob Watkins](#) was convicted by a non-unanimous jury of rape and other crimes in Marion County, Oregon. He was exonerated in 2023 after a court ruled that the verdict was unconstitutional and Watkins presented affidavits from several witnesses challenging the testimony and truthfulness of the woman who filed the complaint.

In 2013, [Dwane Handy](#) was sentenced to life in prison without parole for a shooting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that killed one man and wounded another. He was granted a new trial based on misconduct by detectives, including Phillip Nordo, and was acquitted at a retrial in April 2024.

[Michael Thompson](#) was convicted in 2014 in Tunica County, Mississippi of driving with a suspended license. He was exonerated later that year when it came to light that the Sheriff had deliberately entrapped him. (UCI)

[Roger Reynolds](#), the former auditor for Butler County, Ohio, was convicted in 2022 of unlawful interest in a public contract. He was exonerated after his attorneys discovered the state failed to disclose exculpatory evidence and an appellate court said there was insufficient evidence to support his conviction.

[Jerry Kindred](#), of Worthington, Indiana, was convicted in 2010 of molesting his girlfriend's 9-year-old granddaughter and sentenced to 35 years in prison. He was exonerated in 2013 after a clinical psychologist testified that sex crimes investigators had contaminated the interview of the victim with leading questions. (UCI)

In 2017, [Darnell Williams](#) was sentenced to probation after he was convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence in Chicago, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2020 after his wife and two children recanted their testimony that he physically assaulted his wife.

In 2016, [Joseph Jefferson-Dust](#) was sentenced to nearly four years in prison after he pled no contest to criminal endangerment of a nine-year-old girl in Billings, Montana. He was exonerated in 2024 after the girl recanted and said no crime had occurred.

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