



A Monthly Summary of Registry Postings

COVID-19 adds Cruel Hardship



Photo: Margo Reed/The Inquirer

[Walter Ogrod](#) was wrongly incarcerated for 23 years, 7 months, and 28 days. As Walter Ogrod's attorneys raced to get his capital murder conviction vacated this spring, they were battling more than just a legal system that kept Ogrod on death row for most of the past 25 years. They were also trying to keep him from dying from COVID-19. Even the victim's mother, also convinced of Ogrod's innocence, [implored the judge](#) to act quickly before Ogrod became sicker.

rates far greater than the national average. For men and women battling wrongful convictions, the COVID-19 virus presents yet another cruel hardship. Ograd is not the only exoneree who tried to keep the virus at bay during the last stages of a lengthy legal process. Several exonerees, including [Kevin Harrington](#), have gone straight from prison into quarantine upon release, extending their isolation from friends and family.

Others never got that chance. Despite the joyous stories of Ograd or Harrington, others remind us of the challenges in undoing a wrongful conviction. This [article](#), from the Baltimore Sun, is a stark reminder of the realities in our prisons.

Read Walter Ograd's story on the Registry.

June 2020: 18 Exonerations Posted

[Browse our recently posted exonerations](#), including:

[Robert Gandy](#) was sentenced to life in prison in 1990 for a robbery in Houston, Texas that left one man dead and two women wounded. He was granted a new trial and the charge dismissed because invalid firearms evidence was used to connect him to the crime.

In 2017, [Paul Kolhoff](#) was sentenced to eight years in prison in Mitchell County, Texas for failing to register as a sex offender. He was exonerated in 2020 based on evidence that he was not required to register.

In 2007, [Kareem Johnson](#) was sentenced to death in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for murder. He was granted a new trial and the charges were dismissed in 2020 because the forensic evidence linking him to the crime was discredited.

In 1988, [Frank Smith Jr.](#) was sentenced to 15 years to life in prison for selling cocaine in Brooklyn, New York. He was exonerated in 2003 after the real drug dealer was identified.

In 1992, [Andrew Reyes](#) was sentenced to 12 years in prison for attempted murder in Blue Island, Illinois. The conviction was reversed in 1993 for insufficient evidence and in 2010 he was granted a certificate of innocence.

[Christopher Baldwin](#) of Houston, Texas, pled guilty to possession of cocaine in 2014. He was exonerated in 2016, after the substance in his pocket was tested and found to be legally prescribed pain medicine.

[Rusty Willing](#) of Quincy, Illinois was sentenced to 30 years in prison for the sexual assault of a child in 2016. He was

molesting his girlfriend's eight-year-old daughter in Columbus, Indiana. He was granted a new trial and the charges were dismissed in 1990 because the trial judge had refused to allow evidence that the girl had accused others of molesting her and had repeatedly changed her account of what happened. *This previously unknown case was discovered, researched, and co-written by undergraduate Criminology, Law & Society students at the University of California, Irvine.*

on new physical evidence that impeached the victim's testimony.

In 2006, [John Fulton](#) and [Anthony Mitchell](#) were each sentenced to 31 years in prison for a murder in Chicago, Illinois. They were exonerated in 2019 based on DNA testing, as well as evidence of their innocence that the police and prosecution had failed to disclose.

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