



THE NATIONAL REGISTRY  
OF EXONERATIONS

## UCI Students Uncover Exonerations



*Justin Yang's 2006 exoneration in Milwaukee, Wisconsin was recently uncovered by UC Irvine students. (Coburn Dukehart/Wisconsin Public Radio)*

Teaching has always been an important part of the Registry's mission. This past spring and early summer, Registry director Simon Cole taught two courses — one graduate, the other undergraduate — at UC Irvine on wrongful convictions. Researchers Maurice Possley and Ken Otterbourg, and Research Scholar Jessica Weinstock Paredes assisted him.

As part of their classwork, the students combed through hundreds of appellate rulings in Wisconsin looking for potential cases of wrongful convictions. They learned how the Registry defines an exoneration and experienced firsthand the painstaking methods we use to research cases. Students even had to talk with attorneys and clerks to get dockets and motions and to understand the intricate issues in each of the cases.

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website, with the final summary, for the wrongful conviction of [Justin Yang](#), posted in August. We are thrilled about these student contributions to the Registry.

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## 17 Exonerations Posted in August

Including Justin Yang, the Registry published 17 exonerations in August. Browse our [recently posted](#) exonerations, including:

In 2012, [Kenneth Smith](#) was convicted of a murder at his third trial in McHenry County, Illinois and was sentenced to 67 years in prison. He was exonerated in 2021 based on evidence showing that others committed the crime.

[Grant Williams](#), of Staten Island, New York, was convicted of second-degree murder in 1997 and sentenced to life in prison. He was exonerated in 2021 after a reinvestigation of his case uncovered new witnesses who said Williams was not involved in the shooting.

In 2010, [Shuaib O'Neill](#) was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for possession of a handgun and marijuana in Queens, New York. He was exonerated in 2016 by an appellate court that concluded police framed O'Neill by planting the gun and marijuana.

In 2005, [Joe Romeo](#) was convicted of drug possession in Detroit, Michigan. He was exonerated in 2021 after a reinvestigation revealed that the drugs police found actually belonged to someone else.

In 2005, [Andrew Royer](#) was sentenced to 55 years in prison for a murder in Elkhart, Indiana. He was exonerated in 2021 based on evidence his confession was false and because the

In 2019, [David Bueso](#) was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of his roommate in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He was granted a new trial because his conviction was based on an 11-1 jury vote, which was ruled unconstitutional. When new witnesses came forward to support his account that he and his roommate had been attacked during a robbery, the case was dismissed.

[Dennis Perry](#), of Jonesboro, Georgia, was convicted of two counts of murder in 2003 and received two life sentences. He was exonerated in 2021 after DNA testing of a hair sample identified another man as the likely suspect in the shootings.

[Darvin Castro Santos](#) was convicted of armed robbery in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana, in 2012 and sentenced to 50 years in prison. He was exonerated in 2021 after DNA testing excluded him as a contributor to evidence left at the crime scene and additional witnesses came forward to support his alibi.

In 1999, [Jarvis Ballard](#) was sentenced to life in prison without parole for participating in a home-invasion rape in Violet, Louisiana. He was exonerated in 2021 by DNA tests and evidence withheld by the prosecution that indicated Ballard was not involved in the crime.

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In 2018, [John Cape](#) was sentenced to 10 years in prison for possession of methamphetamine in San Antonio, Texas. He was exonerated in 2021 after police discovered the drugs were planted by a corrupt informant.

In 2018, [Louis Garcia](#) was sentenced to 8 years in prison for possession of methamphetamine in San Antonio, Texas. He was exonerated in 2021 after police discovered the drugs were planted by a corrupt informant.

In 1990, [Carlton Roman](#) was sentenced to more than 43 years in prison for a murder in Queens, New York. He was exonerated in 2021 after a reinvestigation of his case found misconduct by the police and perjury by the state's two main witnesses.

In 1977, [Frank LaPena](#) was convicted of murder in Las Vegas, Nevada and sentenced to life in prison. He was pardoned and granted a certificate of innocence in 2021 based on evidence that the main witness against him was the killer.

years in prison for attempted malicious wounding, even though a witness testified at trial that he was the shooter and that Morman wasn't even there. An eyewitness recanted his testimony in 2016, and Morman received an absolute pardon from Gov. Ralph Northam in 2021.

In 1990, [Joseph Carter](#), of Norfolk, Virginia, was sentenced to 25 to 50 years in prison for murder. He was pardoned in 2021 after a witness recanted and the lead detective was convicted in federal court for misconduct involving the manipulation of witnesses in other cases.

[Mark Hazelwood](#), the former president of Pilot Flying J Corporation, was convicted by a federal jury in Tennessee of fraud and witness tampering in connection with a scheme to defraud the company's diesel-fuel customers. His conviction was vacated in 2020 and charges dismissed in 2021, after an appellate court said that the trial judge erred in letting jurors hear racist statements made by Hazelwood and his attorneys uncovered evidence that undercut testimony that he engaged in witness tampering.

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