



# One-Day Record Set for Murder Exonerations in “Wrongful Conviction Capital”

On August 9, 2022, the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office in Chicago, Illinois, agreed to dismiss charges against seven defendants who were wrongfully convicted of murder based in part on misconduct committed by former Detective Reynaldo Guevara of the Chicago Police Department.

We’ve seen other instances where multiple defendants charged with separate crimes have been exonerated on the same day based on systematic police misconduct. But these are almost always for drug crimes. The Guevara cases are different, because they involved convictions for murder.

To date, [31 exonerations](#) included in the Registry, counting nine we published in August, are tied to Guevara’s misconduct — misconduct that took the form of both physical and psychological abuse during interviews with witnesses and suspects which led to false confessions and perjury. We are researching others right now. The Illinois Appellate Court called Guevara “a malignant blight on the Chicago Police Department and the judicial system.”

For good reason, Chicago is sometimes called the nation’s “Wrongful Conviction Capital.” Since 2012, we’ve researched and posted nearly 450 exonerations from Cook County. Many of these cases are connected. They include the exonerations tied to former [Sgt. Ronald Watts](#), who framed more than 150 defendants for drug crimes, as well as exonerations tied to former Lt. Jon Burge and his associates.

Our research and our coding allows us to connect cases and present the stories of these defendants with context and insight. This enables users of our data to study wrongful convictions from a range of perspectives, from individual exonerees to the cases of numerous exonerees who were snared in the same web of injustice.



*Marilyn Mulero, who was sentenced to death in 1993 and exonerated in 2022 after evidence of Guevara's rampant misconduct was discovered. (Photo courtesy of the Chicago Tribune)*

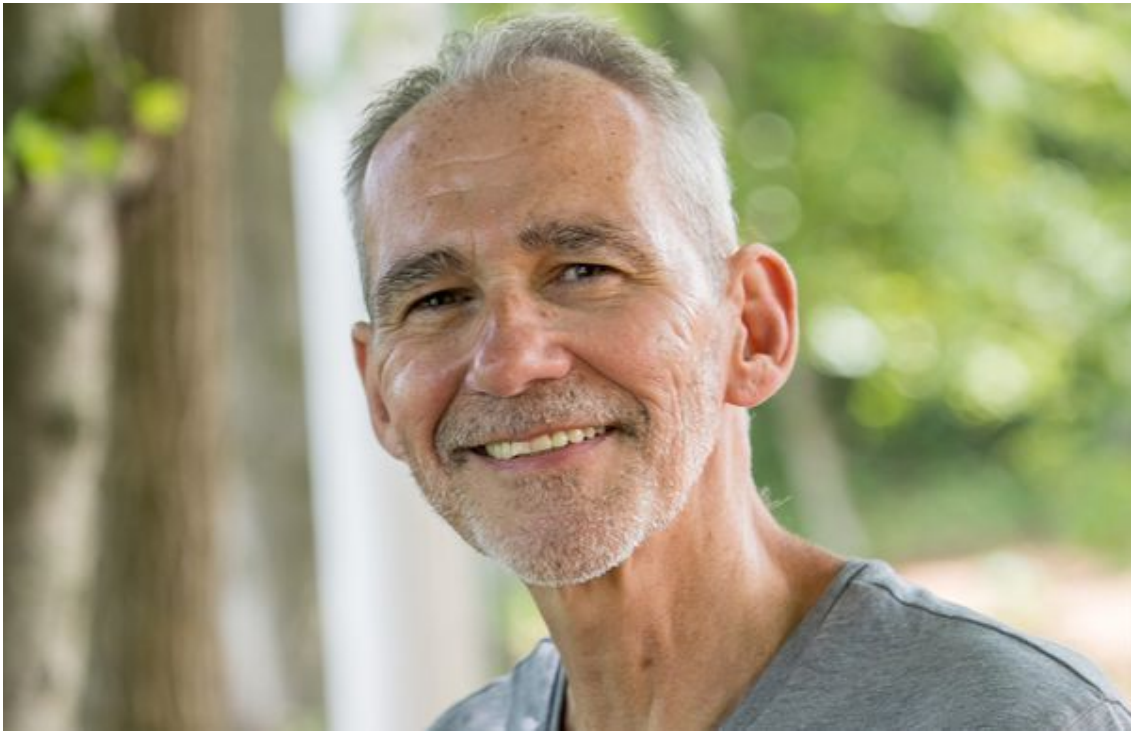
The Registry also recently welcomed Professor Jeffrey S. Gutman, of George Washington University Law School, as a Special Contributor to our staff to expand the Registry's coverage of wrongful conviction compensation issues. Since he co-counseled compensation cases brought in the District of Columbia on behalf of four wrongly convicted men several years ago, Professor Gutman has engaged in a research project designed to determine which of the exonerees listed in the Registry sought compensation and how their claims were resolved. That research has resulted in three law review articles.

Equally important, Professor Gutman's research, which includes documents received through public-records requests to agencies that rule on claims for state compensation, frequently leads us to exonerations we would have otherwise missed, such as the case we published last month of [William Nakano](#).

Check out our series "Compensation Under the Microscope," where Professor Gutman writes about particular state compensation laws or on general compensation issues of public interest. The series, along with state-by-state compensation data, can be found on our website's [compensation issues page](#).

We also are deeply saddened to note the passing of [Ray Champagne](#), who died July 19 from injuries suffered in a motorcycle accident. Champagne spent more than 40 years in prison after being convicted of murder in 1979. He was exonerated in 2020 and became a [leading advocate](#) for wrongfully convicted persons.

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*Exoneree Ray Champagne. (Photo courtesy of the New England Innocence Project)*

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## Exonerations Posted in August

We posted 42 exonerations in August. Here are some highlights.

Rather than stand trial for the brutal sexual assault of the Central Park Jogger that occurred when he was 14, [Steven Lopez](#) pled guilty to robbery in 1991 and served time in a juvenile facility. Although his co-defendants, the Exonerated Five, were exonerated in 2002, it took another 20 years for Lopez to be vindicated. The newly elected Manhattan District Attorney and his post-conviction justice unit reviewed Lopez's conviction in 2022 and agreed it should also be vacated due to the false confessions and misleading forensic evidence that tainted the cases against the other defendants.

Since 2013, the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office Conviction Review Unit has been re-investigating more than 50 murder cases involving alleged misconduct of NYPD Detective Louis Scarcella, who retired in 1999. [James Irons](#), [Vincent Ellerbe](#), and [Thomas Malik](#) were convicted in 1996 of killing a subway token-booth attendant, a highly publicized murder originally investigated by Scarcella and his partner. A re-investigation uncovered new evidence of innocence, including false confessions, unreliable eyewitness IDs, and possible perjury.

[Mark Carver](#) was convicted by a North Carolina jury of murder in 2011 based on weak circumstantial evidence, largely consisting of a mixture of touch DNA found on the victim's car. Represented by the North Carolina Center on Actual Innocence, Carver was exonerated in 2022 after a judge found Carver's trial attorney failed to adequately challenge the state on this evidence, which by current testing methods would have been deemed inconclusive in tying Carver to the crime.

Other exonerations, including several Guevara cases, that we published in August: [Shawn Beverly](#), [Albert Cass](#), [Charles Cottle](#), [Ronald Demby](#), [Bryheem Frazier](#), [Paul Gibson](#), [William Graham](#), [Robert Henderson](#), [Joseph Jackson](#), [Melvin McLean](#), [Kenneth Pitts](#), [Antwyne Rolax](#), [Oscar Ruiz](#), [Juan Troche](#), [Harold Whitley](#), [Jose Vega](#), [Eruby Abrego](#), [Sullivan Walter](#), [Jeremiah Cain](#), [David Colon](#), [Carlos Andino](#), [David Gecht](#), [Alfredo Gonzalez](#), [Nelson Gonzalez](#), [Marilyn Mulero](#), [Rosendo Hernandez](#), [Juan Hernandez](#), [D'Andre Fuller](#), [Francisco Nanez](#), [Arthur Almendarez](#), [John Galvan](#), [Roger Boncy](#), [Joseph Baptiste](#), [Mark Craighead](#), and [Cedric Dent](#).

We also published 16 individual exonerations in July: [Ramon Alvarez](#), [Jherelle Bailey](#), [Nathaniel Ballard](#), [Joel Barnes](#), [Gilbert Becerra](#), [Bryan Bemboom](#), [Jose Cruz](#), [Matthew Dixon](#), [Jane Dorotik](#), [Jeremy Jackson](#), [Edward Johnson](#), [Joseph Livingston](#), [Derrie Nelson](#), [Nicholas Peterson](#), [Dawan Warren](#), and [Danny Wilber](#).

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**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.

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