

Innocence Project of Texas

'Justice Is Truth in Action' - Benjamin Disraeli



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dallas Exoneree, Eugene Ivory Henton, To Be Released Friday

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The Innocence Project of Texas is pleased to announce that Dallas Exoneree, Eugene Ivory Henton, is scheduled to be released from incarceration this Friday after his writ hearing in Dallas Criminal District Court 203, 7th floor of the Frank Crowley building at 8:30 a.m.

Mr. Henton was wrongfully convicted of sexual assault in Dallas County in 1984. Only seventeen years old at the time, Henton accepted a plea agreement and served 18 months. Upon his release, he struggled to overcome the trauma of being wrongfully incarcerated, the difficulty with finding employment, and the burden of living with the community's stigma of him as a sexual predator. With few options, Henton attempted to turn a quick dollar selling drugs. That life eventually caught up with him and resulted in a subsequent drug conviction.

In 2006, DNA testing for the original sexual assault was ordered by the court, and the results proved that Mr. Henton was not the victim's assailant. Prior to his exoneration, however, this past wrongful conviction had led to the enhancement of Henton's "drug possession with intent to distribute" conviction. This unfortunate combination of events ultimately ended with Mr. Henton being sentenced to 13 years in Texas prison.

Henton openly admits that being sent to prison for the second time probably saved him from a life of crime and death on the streets. However, his situation demonstrates the reverberating effects that a wrongful conviction can have on an individual. But for the initial wrongful conviction in 1984, Henton would not have been labeled as a sex offender and forced to make due on the streets without the support of his community and a without the opportunity to obtain gainful employment.

Henton's story highlights several of the issues that the wrongfully convicted face upon their release from incarceration. Among the most difficult tasks for these men is locating housing and employment. Even those who have been proven innocent in a court of law struggle to convince potential employers, landlords, and members of the community of

their innocence. They engage in a constant battle to reclaim their names and their place in the community.

In recognition of the challenges that exonerees face on a daily basis, the Innocence Project of Texas is creating a Texas Exoneree Council so that exonerated individuals may share their experiences and offer each other a network of support. Additionally, the Innocence Project of Texas will host the first annual DNA Blues Ball on Saturday, November 24 at 8:00 p.m. at the Lakewood Theater in Dallas, Texas. Proceeds from tickets and merchandise sales will directly support our organization's efforts to exonerate the wrongfully convicted and provide critical support to exonerees upon their release from incarceration.