



Innocence Project of Texas to Release Report on Use of Dog Scent Lineups in Texas

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On Monday, September 21 the Innocence Project of Texas (IPOT) will be releasing a report on the use of dog-scent lineups in Texas and the career of Fort Bend County Sheriff's Deputy Keith Pikett, whose work has led to wrongful arrests and the conviction of potentially hundreds of individuals in the state. IPOT volunteers reviewed thousands of pages of court transcripts, researched the state of genuine scientific knowledge in this area, and interviewed scores of people before writing this report. Proof of the unscientific nature of scent lineups currently being used in Texas will be revealed at a press conference on Monday.

Much like John Preston, a Florida dog handler whose use of scent lineups led to the wrongful convictions of at least three innocent defendants, two individuals who were identified by Deputy Pikett's hounds as being tied to crime scene evidence have since been proven innocent. Calvin Lee Miller was proven innocent of a sexual assault with DNA evidence despite being tied to the crime by Pikett's scent lineups. Likewise, Michael Buchanek was later cleared of murder when a different man confessed to the crime.

These are not the only men whose lives were torn apart by scent lineups in Texas. In 2008, Curvis Bickham suffered a similar ordeal when he was arrested for murder and held in jail for eight months based on dog-scent lineup evidence provided to the police by Keith Pikett. Charges against Bickham were dropped earlier this year; however, Bickham's life continues to be adversely affected by his wrongful arrest and the accusations made against him.

According to IPOT Chief Counsel Jeff Blackburn, "Deputy Pikett's dog scent lineups are perfect examples of the types of junk science that should be kept out of the Texas criminal justice system." Texas, which already leads the nation in the number of wrongful convictions exposed by DNA and has recently come under scrutiny as a result of evidence indicating that Cameron Todd Willingham was executed for a crime he did not commit, is in a perfect position to lead the way in eliminating the use of junk science in the courtroom. After a careful analysis of the role of junk science in wrongful convictions, the use of junk science in Texas, and the practice of conducting dog-scent lineups in criminal cases, IPOT's report will make a series of demands in order to identify and correct those cases where junk science has led to wrongful convictions.

A press conference on this report will be held at 3:00pm on Monday, September 21 at the Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law (Moot Court Room) in Houston, Texas. The event will be attended by IPOT representatives, Curvis Bickham, Dr. Lawrence Myers (an expert in the area of dog handlers, canine olfaction, and the use of scent lineups), TCDLA President Stanley Schneider, area criminal defense lawyers, and others with direct ties to the work of Keith Pikett. Members of the media in attendance will be provided with a copy of the IPOT report and relevant exhibits. They will also be given ample time to ask questions of the attendees.