



Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University

ABOUT THE INNOCENCE PROJECT

The Innocence Project (“IP”) founded in 1992 at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law by civil rights attorneys Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld provides *pro bono* post-conviction legal assistance to persons whose claims of innocence might be demonstrably proven by DNA testing. Since its inception, 183 people in the United States have been exonerated through DNA testing, including 14 who were sentenced to death at one time. The Innocence Project was either the attorney of record or assisted in the majority of these cases.

The pioneering use of DNA has done more than free these exonerees. The Innocence Project has provided irrefutable proof that wrongful convictions are not isolated or rare events but arise from systemic defects that can be precisely identified and addressed. The IP’s policy department addresses the underlying causes of wrongful convictions through substantive reforms to protect Americans. Our primary policy objectives are to guarantee access to post-conviction DNA testing; establish professional standards and independent oversight of crime labs; and prevent mistaken eyewitness identifications.

The Innocence Project forges common ground among all those affected: the wrongfully convicted and their families, crime victims and their families, and criminal justice professionals. A national network of over 30 organizations dedicated to innocence related issues has emerged, bringing together prosecutors, the police, civil rights activists and victim’s rights groups. The Innocence Project is committed to the integrity and truth-revealing function of our criminal justice system. Perhaps most significantly, the exonerations are an important and timely reminder that our criminal justice system must be anchored in the presumption of innocence.