

The MacArthur Justice Center

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Lawsuit Challenges Chicago Police Defense of Traditional Lineups

New Analysis Finds 54 Innocent Illinois Citizens Have Spent Total of 601 Years in Prison Because of Erroneous Eyewitness Convictions

What: The National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers will file a lawsuit tomorrow against the Chicago police and other Illinois police departments that participated in a controversial study of eyewitness and police lineups. The police refused to provide the underlying data and protocols supporting the report's controversial conclusion that current eyewitness procedures—those that use traditional line ups where all suspects stand in a room together—are more effective than new procedures in which witnesses view one suspect at a time under the supervision of an officer who does not know who the suspect is in the line up.

The report astounded many people in the legal community because previous research has shown that these updated identification procedures can significantly reduce the rate of erroneous eyewitness identifications.

When/Where: **TOMORROW, February 8, 2007, 10:00 am**
Northwestern University School of Law
Rubloff Building, 8th Floor
750 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago

Who:

- **Men who were wrongfully convicted** because of erroneous eyewitness identification: Michael Evans, 27 years in prison because of false identification; Oscar Walden Jr., 13 years in prison because of false identification; Alejandro Dominguez, 12 years in prison because of false identification
- **Martin S. Pinales**, president, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL), lawsuit plaintiff
- **Rob Warden**, executive director, Center on Wrongful Convictions, expert on causes of wrongful convictions
- **Locke Bowman**, legal director, MacArthur Justice Center, filing lawsuit on behalf of NACDL

Why: In Illinois alone, 54 innocent people have spent a total of 601 years behind bars because of erroneous eyewitness convictions, according to a new analysis by the Center on Wrongful Convictions. In an effort to reduce false convictions, experts have found and tested new methods for eyewitness identification that have been proven to work. Because the Illinois report, released in 2006, finds that traditional lineups are more effective than these new methods and contradicts all previous research on eyewitness identification, many legal experts and professionals suspect the research is flawed.

As a result, the MacArthur Justice Center, on behalf of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, requested the data on which the report's findings were based but the request was refused or ignored by all police departments involved.

They will file a lawsuit tomorrow in state court seeking a court order directing the police departments involved—Chicago, Joliet, Evanston and Illinois—to turn over the underlying data from the taxpayer-funded report.

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