



Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University

Timeline of Events: Forensic Misconduct Leading to Wrongful Convictions in Cleveland

October 1988

Anthony Michael Green is convicted of rape and aggravated robbery based on eyewitness misidentification and misleading testimony of forensic analyst Joseph Serowik.

June 1997

A 74-year-old woman is severely beaten in her Cleveland home. She survives, but falls into a coma.

July 1997

Jason Smith is charged with attempted aggravated murder based on a fingerprint linking him to the crime scene.

March 1998

Smith pleads guilty to aggravated burglary and receives a 3-year sentence in exchange for testifying against Thomas Siller and Walter Zimmer for the attempted murder.

June 1998

Serowik, who examined a pair of Smith's pants, testifies at the Siller and Zimmer trial that a series of dark stains on the pants are not bloodstains.

July 1998

Siller and Zimmer are found guilty of attempted murder; Siller is sentenced to 20 years and Zimmer to 40 years.

April 1999

The elderly victim dies.

May 2000

Siller and Zimmer are indicted for aggravated murder.

May 2001

After more than 12 years in prison, Green's motion for DNA testing is granted.

July 2001

At Siller's murder trial, Serowik is asked to retest the pants. He admits to finding a single drop of blood on the back of the pants, which is consistent with the victim, but testifies that no other bloodstains are evident.

August 2001

Siller is convicted of aggravated murder and sentenced to 30 years without parole.

October 2001

DNA test results prove Anthony Michael Green innocent and he is exonerated.

June 2004

Green reaches a settlement with the City of Cleveland in his civil lawsuit, and the city agrees to undertake an audit of the city police laboratory. The audit is to be overseen by former U.S. Attorney James Wolley and conducted by criminalist Robert Spalding.

November 2004

Siller's motion for post-conviction DNA testing denied.

August 2005

Spalding issues a report citing troubling inconsistencies in Serowik's testimony in several cases, including Siller and Zimmer's.

December 2005

Court grants Siller's motion for DNA testing.

December 2006

DNA testing shows eight bloodstains on Smith's pants that reveal a genetic profile consistent with the victim.

January 2006

The Innocence Project and the Ohio Innocence Project file motions to vacate Siller and Ziller's convictions.