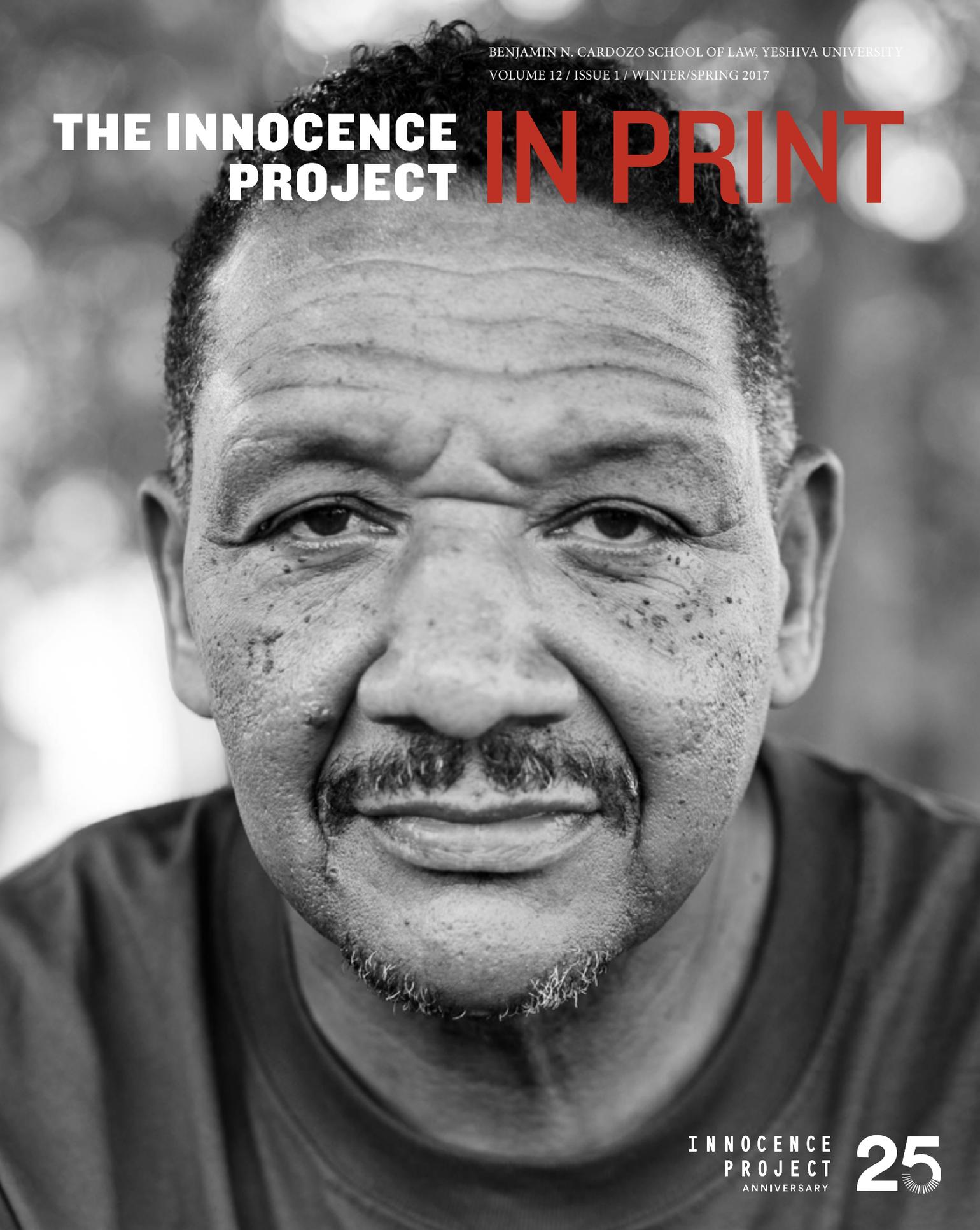


BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW, YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
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THE INNOCENCE PROJECT **IN PRINT**



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ON THE COVER

Darryl Howard, photographed this summer near his home in North Carolina, was released from prison and exonerated of a wrongful conviction for double murder in August 2016. He spent 25 years incarcerated for a crime he did not commit. Photo: Sameer Abdel-Khalek.

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INNOCENCE PROJECT



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STANDING UP TO THE GIANT



This year marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Innocence Project. It promises to be eventful—a time for reflection and celebration.

Back in 1992, the Innocence Project was the equivalent of David facing the Goliath of the acutely dysfunctional criminal justice system that up until that point was rarely confronted about the

integrity of the convictions it secured.

In fact, wrongful conviction was a novel concept altogether and not only to the general public, but also in legal circles. There were few others pursuing wrongful conviction cases in a systematic fashion at the time. The Innocence Project was embarking on largely uncharted territory. But armed with DNA science and steady backing from loyal supporters, we forged ahead and started our now-decades long fight to expose and to help correct cases of injustice. Twenty-five years later—as we continue to battle the giant—we’ve directly helped nearly 200 innocent people get exonerated of crimes they didn’t commit and helped change laws and practice across the country.

This issue explores the stories of two of those individuals—Anthony Wright and Darryl Howard. Both wrongly convicted within a couple of years of the Innocence Project’s founding, these brave individuals just recently regained their freedom in August 2016—within days of one another.

Their stories are stark reminders of how long it takes to overturn a wrongful conviction in this country. As Anthony says in “The Luckiest Guy in the World”: “For all those years, I endured so much. Do you know how many times the door was shut on me—slammed in my face? I just kept on knocking.” Their stories also teach us how the pursuit of truth and justice requires stamina and vigilance. Read about Darryl’s wife Nannie Howard in “A Love Supreme,” and the personal commitment she made to Darryl and to herself to never stop fighting for his freedom.

No doubt, after 25 years of this work, the Innocence Project knows that fighting injustice takes patience and true grit. It also takes help—your help! We are indebted to the many people who have supported us and our work through the long haul. We simply could not have done any of this without you.

And now on to the next 25 years. Certainly, we have our work cut out for us. We lost an important ally in the White House and face great uncertainty moving forward. But with experience behind us and science on our side, we will push ahead in full belief that the desire for justice is not partisan.

All the best,

Maddy deLone

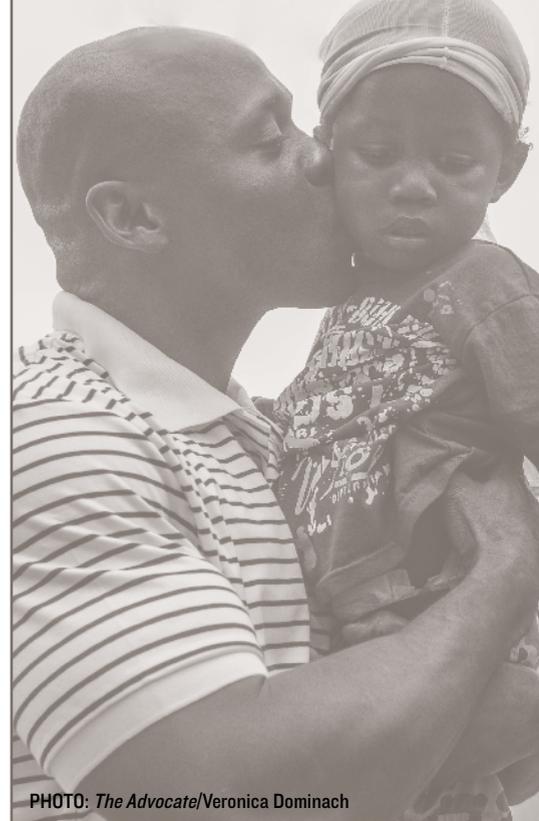


PHOTO: *The Advocate*/Veronica Dominach

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MICHIGAN PASSES LAW TO COMPENSATE WRONGFULLY CONVICTED

In late December, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signed into law the “Wrongful Imprisonment Compensation Act.” This new legislation will provide people who were exonerated of wrongful convictions in Michigan with \$50,000 per year of imprisonment as well as some restitution for attorney fees and other expenses.

“We applaud Gov. Snyder and the state for enacting this law. It is a necessary step towards providing the crucial resources that exonerees need when reintegrating into mainstream society. Now, wrongfully convicted Michiganders will have an opportunity to seek the compassionate assistance they deserve,” said Amol Sinha, state policy advocate for the Innocence Project.

Over the past 25 years, 66 people in Michigan have been exonerated of crimes they did not commit. With no compensation law in place, these individuals had to forge ahead with

their new lives without the financial means to do so. This legislation will offer Michigan exonerees much needed support.

State Senator Steve Beida (D-Warren), who sponsored the bill, worked for more than a decade to get this legislation passed.

“They’re not going to get rich off this,” said Beida in an interview with local news station WEMU. “But it will give them the chance to do something that’s meaningful and allow them to move forward.” ■





SONGS FOR JUSTICE

INNOCENCE PROJECT PARTNERS WITH ROCK ICONS ON 2016 TOURS

Legendary folk singer and Innocence Ambassador Joan Baez teamed up with the Innocence Project and members of the Innocence Network to raise awareness of wrongful convictions during the North American leg of her 2016 tour.

Volunteers and staff from Innocence Network projects across the nation joined Baez on her 20-city tour, informing concertgoers about wrongful convictions, their contributing causes and the efforts to free the innocent and enact reforms.

“I’m thrilled to lend my voice to such an important cause and help in the fight against wrongful convictions,” Baez told *Broadway World*. “We hope to provide a platform that will amplify the heartbreaking stories of men and women wrongfully convicted. The fight against unlawful convictions shines a light on both a broken criminal justice system and the racial inequality of people serving

time. I hope my audiences will be motivated to support their work.”

The tour kicked off on Wrongful Conviction Day (October 4) in Portland, Maine.

Earlier in the year, the Innocence Project joined Innocence Ambassador Chris Martin and the other members of Coldplay on the North American leg of their “Head Full of Dreams” tour. More than 100 volunteers donated their time during the 22-city tour, reaching thousands of new supporters.

The Innocence Project sends out a big thank you to all of the generous people who volunteered their time at each show. ■

Above: A colorful moment at Coldplay’s “Head Full of Dreams Tour.” PHOTO: HANNAH RILEY

What to Read and Watch:

Two Exonerees Recount Their Wrongful Convictions in Books and Film

Nick Yarris spent 21 years on Pennsylvania's death row for a rape and murder he did not commit before he was exonerated in 2003. In 2007, Yarris began working with filmmaker David Singleton on *Fear of 13*, a documentary about his wrongful conviction, his time in prison, his exoneration and his release.

The film follows Yarris as he recounts his ordeal, from the routine traffic stop that resulted in his initial arrest, to his conviction in 1982 based on the testimony of an incentivized witness. He describes the horror of solitary confinement and the ways in which he learned to cope.

Yarris was one of the first death row inmates in Pennsylvania to request post-conviction DNA testing to prove his innocence. In 2003, results from DNA evidence excluded Yarris. Based on that evidence, he was exonerated and released.

In an interview for the Innocence Blog in August, Yarris said he was overwhelmed by the public's response to the film, which is available for streaming on Netflix.

"I have to say that I am blown away," Yarris said. "The film is being called so many wonderful, positive things. I have wonderful messages sent to me from people across the globe telling me how the film has impacted their lives. What is really amazing is how many police officers tell me how proud they are of me and how they want me to know that they are better officers since seeing the film."

A book based on the film, also titled *Fear of 13*, will be released in July.

Exoneree Dewey Bozella released his autobiography, *Stand Tall: Fighting for My Life, Inside and Outside the Ring*, in December. Bozella served 26 years in prison for a murder he did not commit before his exoneration in 2009.

In *Stand Tall*, Bozella recounts his life story, from his childhood in foster care, to his wrongful conviction and exoneration, to his career as a champion boxer. He relives the agony of being denied parole four times and of living in a cellblock with his brother's murderer and, eventually, with the person who likely committed the crime for which he was wrongly convicted.

In an interview for the Innocence Blog in December, Bozella said he hopes the book will spread a message of hope.

"I hope that it influences people to never give up, [shows them] that there is always someone in a worse position than you," Bozella said. "Not to hold on to anger or pain, to learn about love, peace, joy and laughter. Don't allow yourself to be trapped in a box, mad every day of your life. You can move forward and laugh and smile instead." ■



INNOCENCE PROJECT EXONEREE SPEAKERS' BUREAU

*Exoneree speakers are available
for your next event!*

The Innocence Project has a strong network of speakers across the nation who can bring their stories of wrongful conviction and exoneration to your school, organization or conference. Our speakers can also discuss their experiences with many of the other pressing problems within the criminal justice system including mass incarceration, mandatory minimums and prison conditions. Here are some of the speaking engagements coordinated by the Innocence Project in 2016:

Yusef Salaam of the Central Park Five spoke at the Berkeley Carroll School in Brooklyn.

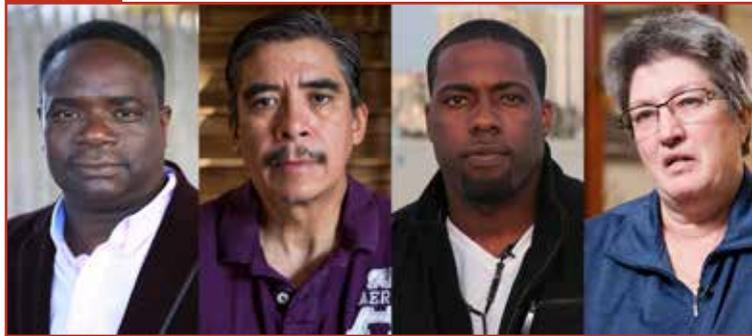
Recent exonerees **Andre Hatchett** and **Darryl Howard** spoke at New York University's Stern School of Business with Innocence Project Staff Attorney Seema Saifee.

Angel Gonzalez spoke at Prairie Ridge and Crystal Lake High Schools in Illinois.

Cornelius Dupree spoke at Lamar University in Texas.

Barry Gibbs spoke at CUNY Hunter College with Innocence Project Director of Post-Conviction Litigation Vanessa Potkin.

To book a speaker for your event, fill out the request form at: innocenceproject.org/speakers-bureau ■



EXAMINING AMERICA'S GUILTY PLEA PROBLEM

On January 23, the Innocence Project in collaboration with the Innocence Network launched **GuiltyPleaProblem.org**. The purpose of this campaign is to expose our country's guilty plea problem through using personal stories of innocent people who pleaded guilty to crimes they didn't commit and the ramifications that they and their loved ones suffered.

It's unknown how many innocent people plead guilty to crimes they didn't commit. In nearly 11 percent of the nation's 350 DNA exoneration cases, innocent people entered guilty pleas. Unquestionably, these cases represent just a small fraction of the innocent people who have pleaded guilty, and there's no telling how many more innocents who entered guilty pleas remain behind bars.

A 2015 article by the National Registry of Exonerations said that 15 percent of people who have been exonerated of crimes they didn't commit entered guilty pleas. According to the article, that's not because innocent people are unlikely to plead guilty but because it is extremely difficult for innocent people who plead guilty to challenge their convictions.

Follow the campaign on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to get special updates and more stories, facts and information. And check out the website: www.guiltypleaproblem.org ■

#guiltypleaproblem

95% OF FELONY CONVICTIONS
IN THE U.S. ARE OBTAINED
THROUGH GUILTY PLEAS

66% OF ALL 345 EXONEREES
WHO PLEADED GUILTY WERE
PEOPLE OF COLOR

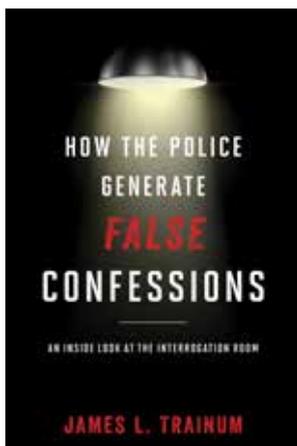




James Trainum PHOTO: MATTEDESIGN

QA & IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

SPECIAL EDITION



“The interrogation methods we use here—they’re cheap, they’re dirty, and they work. They just work too well.”

—James Trainum

An Interview with James Trainum

By Rebecca Brown

In this edition of “In Their Own Words,” Innocence Project Director of Policy Rebecca Brown interviews veteran detective James Trainum about his new book *How the Police Generate False Confessions*. Read more for an illuminating conversation that explains why false confessions happen more often than most people think.

Despite headline-catching cases grounded in false confessions—from the Norfolk Four to the Central Park Five—the idea that someone would confess to a crime he or she didn’t commit remains a counterintuitive phenomenon for most of the public. What’s worse, when determining whether or not a confession should be admitted into evidence, courts do not assess reliability, but only whether the confession was provided voluntarily. At the Innocence Project, our attorneys have brought these issues to the forefront by challenging the veracity of confession evidence in innocence cases and our strategic litigation team has begun to take on reliability issues systemically in the courts. In tandem, our policy work focuses on ensuring the electronic recording of custodial interrogations, a practice that provides an irrefutable record of what transpired in the interrogation room, thus assisting fact-finders in making determinations about reliability.

Former homicide detective James Trainum knows the value of this practice too well. It was a recorded interrogation that led him to discover that he had unknowingly elicited a false confession. That experience led him to dive deeply into the issue and the scientific research which explains how false confessions are generated and can be prevented, eventually publishing a new book on the topic.



James Trainum and Rebecca Brown discuss the false confession phenomenon and his new book.

PHOTO: MATTEDESIGN

Q REBECCA BROWN: You recently published a book, *How the Police Generate False Confessions*, which provides a fascinating perspective on the phenomenon of false confessions. Before turning to the dynamics that play out in the interrogation room, though, I thought it would be helpful for readers to first understand the personal and institutional pressures on law enforcement related to crime solving. What do you think are the ties between the pressure to solve an investigation and false confessions?

A JIM TRAINUM: We're under such immense pressure to close cases and close cases quickly, and often times the bosses are on us—not only the bosses, but the press—and confessions are really an easy way to close a case out. If you get somebody to confess, there will be no need to do any type of follow-up investigation, which is part of the problem, and it basically makes for lazy cops. And the way that we're trained to get confessions, we actually are able to shortcut a lot of the investigative process and therefore save a whole lot of time and energy.

Q RB: And by “shortcut” the investigative process, what do you mean? That you get the confession so early that that's pretty much the end?

A JT: Well, not only that but we're allowed to not conduct a lot of the investigative steps that we normally would; we just kind of put those aside. The people who do what I call “investigation-by-interrogation,” they just round up the usual suspects, they put them in the interrogation room, they yell and scream at them or use these very coercive tactics, and just see what happens. And if they break, they break, and if they don't, they're ruled out and they move on.

But it takes a lot of time to pull phone records, do timelines, do all of this other sort of stuff which makes for a good investigation. And it actually makes for a good interrogation because you have all of this evidence in hand before you go into the interrogation room. But if you can bypass all of that and just put the suspect under pressure and get him to crack, you know, that's a case solved.

Q RB: Do you think pressures on investigators to solve crime also leads to other phenomena in policing like tunnel vision, whereby investigators lock in on a particular suspect and reject other possible theories of a crime?

A JT: Yes, we're not really trained very well in how tunnel vision affects investigations. People expect us to be Sherlock Holmes. They expect us to get on the scene and be able to read the scene, interpret it and then move on.

This phenomenon of tunnel vision was recognized even back in the 1800s. Sherlock Holmes even said that you should never theorize before you have all the facts because what you do is you then mold the facts to fit the theory. That's exactly what happens today. In every single wrongful conviction, you see where that did happen. Tunnel vision plays a huge role in all of these cases.

Q RB: In Innocence Project cases, we've seen instances where investigators, prosecutors and judges continue to believe in the veracity of a false confession, even in the face of DNA evidence that ultimately proves

innocence. Why do think it's so hard for people to accept the possibility that a mentally capable person would give a false confession?

A JT: We project how we think we would respond under stress or under different circumstances, and the reality is that we're typically wrong. We have no comprehension of what it's like being in there in that interrogation room, being subjected to these sorts of pressures. And so, since I wouldn't do it, why would somebody else do it?

It's funny because one of the things I write about in the book is how it wasn't that long ago that the judges and jurors and everybody else didn't have a lot of faith in confessions, but for some reason now we do. That even comes to our training. For years, we were trained that normal people would never confess to a crime they did not commit. Even today the leading interrogation schools—even though they acknowledge that false confessions occur—they don't talk about it in their classrooms, and they actually minimize it.

Q RB: It isn't often known but it's surprising to many, that courts, when they allow a confession to be considered by juries, are only permitted to consider whether a confession was voluntarily provided and not whether the confession is reliable. How did this come to be the case, and do you agree with this legal framework?

A **JT:** Well, I don't agree with it. I don't quite understand how it became the case unless they thought that that was up to the jury to decide—that they didn't want the judges to determine reliability. But judges look at reliability all the time with other evidence. They look at eyewitness evidence, they determine reliability there; if it's not reliable for whatever reason, it's not going to go in front of the jury.

But for some reason, with confessions, they figure that the jurors are smart enough to be able to figure it out without any sort of education as to how or why somebody may decide that it's a good idea to confess to a crime that they didn't do.

Q **RB:** The Innocence Project's policy agenda has traditionally focused on recording custodial interrogations. Can you describe the value of that reform?

A **JT:** Well, one thing I'd like to bring up is that recording interrogations from start to finish does not prevent false confessions; all it does is give you a tool to go back and critically analyze two things. One, how did the confession come about? What was it that was done in the interrogation room to convince the person it was a good idea to say these things? And two—more importantly—is the reliability: Who told the story? Was it the detective unintentionally providing that information to the suspect, or the suspect giving it back to the detective on their own?

Q **RB:** There seems to be a small but growing movement to explore and train law enforcement in alternative interrogation methods. Can you describe how these newer methods differ from the traditional ones and whether law enforcement should implement them?

A **JT:** The newer interrogation methods mostly came from the United Kingdom. They abandoned all of the interrogation techniques that we use here in the United States. Their goal when they go into the interrogation room is not to get a confession but to get information. They're highly trained in how to do that and how to structure their questioning so that it's not coercive and it doesn't unintentionally provide the suspect with information. More importantly, they're trained in how to confront the suspect with the evidence so that the suspect isn't able to explain it away with a hastily conceived alibi and it doesn't contaminate the interrogation down the road.

Law enforcement needs encouragement to adopt these techniques. The problem with them is that they're labor intensive. It requires all of that investigative work that I told you we're skipping to begin with, and it involves a lot more training and supervision. Like I said, those types of interviews take a lot longer. The interrogation methods we use here—they're cheap, they're dirty, and they work. They just work too well.

Q **RB:** What do you think law enforcement can do to determine whether a confession they receive that seems convincing is accurate and reliable?

A **JT:** Well there are several steps that they should do with every single statement, be it a confession but also witness statements, victim statements, informant statements. Look at the information that is being provided: Does this stuff match what we know about the crime? If it does, the second step is: Where did the information come from? From the suspect? Or from some outside source like me as the detective showing them a crime scene photo or asking them leading questions. The

most important thing with every single interview is to look for information that I don't know about the crime that I can then go out and corroborate, preferably by physical evidence, but that I can corroborate.

I often remind my colleagues that if a witness came into your office and said, "This is what I saw," you would kick them out if it didn't match the crime scene. But suddenly when they say, "I did it," then all of the inconsistencies, all of the errors, they suddenly disappear and their word is gold.

Q **RB:** What is your feeling or opinion about the use of deception? Do you think that there is a role for deceptive techniques?

A **JT:** Absolutely not. I don't think it should be used at all. I think it cheapens the integrity of the detective. You see it in just about every wrongful conviction case. But the leading interrogation schools, even the Reid school, say that it's necessary—we should use it as a tool. However, they also say that it should not be used if you have either real or implied threats of some sort of inevitable consequence, combined with real or implied promises of leniency because those things combined could induce somebody to falsely confess. But that's what an interrogation is! It's all of those things.

Q **RB:** And it's part of their own method.

A **JT:** It's part of their own method, and it's not just used once; it's used over and over again. What I find really disturbing is that the Reid people talk about how it's necessary to use what would normally be considered unethical practices because the people that you're dealing with are on a lower moral plane.



PHOTO: MATTEDESIGN

Q **RB:** But that presumes that they are.

A **JT:** That presumes that they are. In the United Kingdom they outlaw all of these things. One of the reasons is that they want people treated with respect and dignity. They also realize that today's suspect may be tomorrow's witness or juror.

Q **RB:** In addition to the false confession phenomenon, your book addresses even larger themes within the investigative and criminal process. You describe incentives and pressures that play out at various points in the system that seem to reward truncated investigations and quickly adjudicated cases. For instance, in your book you argue that a guilty plea is nothing more than a confession. Why would somebody plead to a crime they didn't do? Are there different factors at play during the interrogation versus a plea setting?

A **JT:** Well, with the guilty plea, typically a lot of times they have their own attorney working against them, and guilty pleas are nothing more than simple business propositions; that's all they are. It's a cost-benefit and there are so many other factors

that could be at play. Also with guilty pleas you have a prosecutor. I've seen prosecutors sitting and talking to cooperators or trying to work out a guilty plea, who make threats that if I made those threats or promises in the interrogation room, the judge would rule that confession to be inadmissible. But since the prosecutor has the power to make those threats or promises come true, they're allowed to do it. I mean, if you've been sitting in jail for six months with no prospect of a trial coming up, you're told that if you plead you're getting out tomorrow, you know that's a pretty good incentive.

Q **RB:** You just touched on this, but do you feel like there are analogous tactics that prosecutors employ in the plea setting that are similar to methods that are used in the interrogation room?

A **JT:** Oh absolutely. I mean the prosecutor will basically tell the person, "I'm seeking the death penalty for you, I'm seeking X amount of time, however if you choose to cooperate, if you choose to plea, you'll get Y amount of time." So they're definitely telling them that they're facing inevitable consequences or close to it. By doing that, just like the detective, they're

saying: "Tell me what I want to hear, and you'll get this benefit. You plead guilty or cooperate—tell me what I want to hear—you're going to get this break."

Q **RB:** As you noted before, the recording of interrogations doesn't do anything to prevent false confessions per se, but there are a number of other things that are out there in the world that we probably could be doing. Do you have recommendations for us around our policy agenda that would move past simply just recording of interrogations?

A **JT:** One, promote training for detectives in how false confessions occur. Especially for supervisors, teach about the red flags that you should look for in the interrogation process. But more importantly, how contamination of the interrogation occurs and what steps should be mandatory in order to determine that that confession is reliable. That's training that needs to be done all across the board not only for cops but also for their supervisors, prosecutors, and judges as well, and defense attorneys.

The other thing is they should have reliability hearings. Just as they do for eyewitness identifications, have reliability hearings for confessions. The judge is supposed to be the gatekeeper, makes sure only quality evidence gets in. If you leave it up to the jury—even in the case of the worst confession—the jury is still going to hear that this person confessed, and that's an uphill battle for any defense attorney. So if you can't pass basic reliability standards, that confession should not be allowed in. ■

In 1993, Anthony Wright was a 22-year-old father, living in his native Philadelphia when he went on trial for the rape and murder of 77-year-old Louise Talley. It was a crime that he didn't commit, but he was convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

THE LUCKIEST IN THE



GUY WORLD

PHOTO: KEVIN MONKO

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In 2013, DNA testing secured by the Innocence Project revealed that Anthony was excluded as the source of the sperm found inside the elderly homicide victim. The DNA implicated another man—Ronnie Byrd, a man with no connection whatsoever to Anthony. All evidence pointed to Anthony’s innocence.

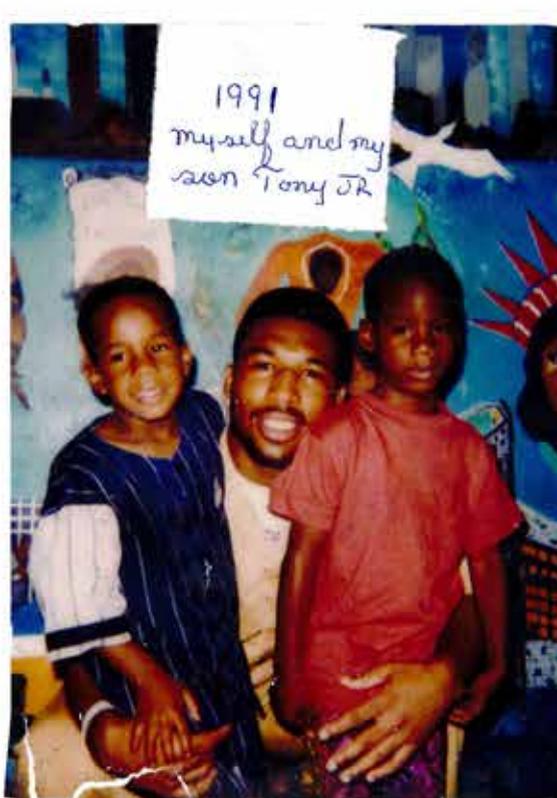
Prosecutors chose to ignore the facts. They reluctantly agreed to throw out Anthony’s 1993 conviction, but decided to retry him, although it was eventually revealed that neither the Philadelphia Police Department nor the district attorney’s office conducted any additional investigation.

In August 2016, buttressed by his legal team, Anthony went back to court.

The Innocence Project in Print interviewed Anthony this past November. He gave a gripping account of what it was like to be retried by a criminal justice system that was bent on blaming him for something that he did not do. Read his first-person story [here](#).

From left to right: Anthony Wright (center) with his son and nephew in 1991; Wright following his acquittal in Philadelphia in August 2016; Wright’s father and son embrace on the day of Wright’s acquittal.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ANTHONY WRIGHT; KEVIN MONKO



ANTHONY WRIGHT IN HIS OWN WORDS

In 2013, the DNA test came back. It was a huge relief. Finally, everybody else found out what I always knew: I was innocent.

For 22 years, I had said I was innocent. I had gone to court. I went to trial. I pleaded not guilty. I voluntarily took the witness stand and said that I didn't have anything to do with the crime—that I didn't know any of the perpetrators of the crime; I had no knowledge of it. But none of that mattered. I was convicted regardless of the facts.

For all those years, I endured so much. Do you know how many times the door was shut on me—slammed in my face? I just kept on knocking. I wasn't going away.

My attorneys fought the district attorney for years so that we could get that test, and they did what they said they would do. They got the evidence tested and proved that I was innocent.

But the Philadelphia prosecutors refused to let me go. Even after the facts came out, they still wanted to retry me. That was like a smack in the face. But, I felt like the results overshadowed everything else. So I knew after that point that it was just a matter of time until justice prevailed.

I wanted to use the trial to clear my family name. The crime that I was wrongly convicted of was the most horrendous crime that any human being could do to another human being, let alone an elderly person. And even more, for the victim, Ms. Talley, I wanted her family to

know that I, Anthony Wright, had nothing to do with the murder, the rape, the robbery of their loved one. That was important to me.

Dealing with this court system, it's horrible. You know, people have power with no accountability, even when they do something wrong. So part of my mission in that trial was for people to see where the system had gone wrong.

PREPARING FOR THE TRIAL OF A LIFETIME

It might sound crazy, but I wasn't worried about a thing. I knew that at the end of that trial, I was going to walk out a free man. I've never been so sure about anything in my life—not anything.



“The evidence was so compelling for Tony that there really could have been no other verdict,”

—Grace Greco, foreperson of the jury on Anthony Wright case, Philadelphia Inquirer

Before the trial started, right before the jury walked in, Nina Morrison—senior attorney at the Innocence Project and my lawyer since 2004—leaned over toward me and asked, “Are you ready for the trial? You’ve waited 24 years for this.” I said, “Absolutely. Let’s go.”

The first day of trial, I wish everything could have just froze. Peter Neufeld gave the opening statement. It was unbelievable. I just wanted to play it over again. We won the trial the first day. Peter Neufeld won the trial the first day.

He had everybody’s attention. He talked about DNA, and the entire case from A to Z. Most opening statements take 20 minutes; Peter went an hour.

He was so good in that opening. I just wanted to get up and kiss him. I had goose bumps. I kept telling Nina, “Pinch me. Pinch me to see if I’m alive.” I was holding my breath. I was hoping that time would stop.

And it wasn’t just the opening argument that was incredible. For the closing argument, I had my local attorney from Philly, Sam Silver. He was brilliant as well. And then I had Nina, and another Philly lawyer named Rebecca Lacher. The whole team was awesome, so I didn’t have a worry in the world.

During the trial, I had the chance to testify. It was great. I’d been waiting for that opportunity for 25 years. When I started testifying, some of the jurors started crying. One of them even called for a recess and she later told us it was because hearing me describe what I went through was so emotional.

The entire trial lasted 11 days. Everyone was following the case—the sheriffs, the guards, the correction officers—everyone. And each day, when it was lunch time, I would go back to my cell and there would be a bunch of sandwiches there waiting for me. But each day, I would pace because I couldn’t wait to get back into court. I would put my hands in my pockets and walk—back and forth, back and forth.

Finally, on the 11th day, the jury went to deliberate.

On that day, I thought that someone was playing with me. As soon as I’d gone down to my cell—the sheriffs came back to get me. I heard, “Yo, we need Anthony.” So I left my cell and went straight upstairs toward the courtroom. The guard told me, “One of your attorneys wants to talk to you.”

Sam came over to talk to me. He said, “We’ve got a verdict.”

Now, Sam’s a jokester, so I told him, “Sam, this is not the time. Not right now, man. Don’t do that.”

He said, “Tony, I swear to God, I’m not lying. They’ve got a verdict.” They’d reached their decision in less than an hour.

Peter and Rebecca came in. Peter said, “Tony—45 years. That’s how long I been doing this. And in all that time, I’ve never witnessed anything like this. If I were a gambling man, I’d put my life on you today.”

I didn’t have a worry in the world, so I told Peter, “I’m ready. Let’s go.”

We went into the courtroom. The jury came back.



Co-Director of the Innocence Project Peter Neufeld was one of the lead attorneys on Wright's trial. Here he's pictured on the day of the acquittal. PHOTO: KEVIN MONKO

The bailiff asked, "How do you find the verdict for the charge of first degree murder?" The forewoman said in a loud, clear voice, "Not guilty!"

"How do you find the verdict in the charge of murder in the second degree?" asked the judge.

The foreperson said, "Not guilty!"

"How do you find in the third degree?" asked the judge.

Again, the lady said, "Not guilty!"

She just kept saying, "Not guilty, not guilty."

When she announced the verdict, I almost passed out. I stood there, crying with my hands in my face. My son was in the courtroom, crying. My parents were behind me, crying. It was unbelievable.

The judge refused to release me from the court. He made me get on a bus and go all the way back to the jail. Even all of the guards were saying privately, "Yo, are you crazy? That man did 25 years in prison and just got acquitted and you're sending him back? Let that man go."

But I'm glad that I went back because it was a celebration like crazy in there. It was insane.

My entire family and all of my attorneys traveled to the jail, too. They were all there to meet me as soon as I was released.

The next day, I got a chance to meet almost all of the jurors. They had been waiting for me right after the verdict was announced, but since I had to go back to the jail, my lawyers invited them to come to

Sam's office the next day. When I finally met them, they hugged me. Everyone was crying. One of them had written a statement for me. She told me that from that moment on, I could do whatever I wanted. My life was mine.

Two days later, I saw the jury forewoman, Grace Greco, on the street. I was shopping for new glasses with my lawyers when I saw her walk by. I said to Rebecca, "That looks like the jury foreman, Ms. Greco."

I ran out after her and called her name. She turned around, saw me and dropped her purse in the middle of the street. She screamed, "Oh my God, Tony!" That lady is so beautiful. She came over and gave me a huge hug.

SINCE RELEASE

If it makes any sense, I'm a spoiled 45-year-old man. My family spoils me and I love it. I'm like a baby.

My aunts bring me big pans of food. I don't ever have to cook. They furnished my whole kitchen—brand new microwave, dishes, pots and pans, toaster—everything that I need—everything.

And everyone in my family checks in with me, makes sure that I'm ok.

I had relationships with all of those people before I was wrongfully convicted, but it wasn't like it is now. Before it was easier to take things for granted. Now I appreciate everything. After going

through something like that, your appreciation and gratitude for even the smallest thing is greater; you appreciate every little thing.

I have a special lady in my life. I appreciate her especially knowing everything she puts up with from me. I'm a hard dude to deal with. I've been through so much. I'm a work in progress. I'm learning every day, even more so now, after having gone through what I have.

I don't hold ill will against anybody, though—no police, no judge, none of those people. I worship and serve the most forgiving and merciful God in the world. So if he can forgive, who am I to hold a grudge? That being said, I don't forget. What happened to me changed my life forever.

I lost my mother in 1998. She was 44 years old. I was 27 years old. I'm now 45 years old. My mother's birthday was November 14. She would have been 63.

The one thing I'm haunted by every day is that when she needed me I wasn't able to be there for her. Only recently, for the first time, I had the chance to go to her grave site.

I'M SO GRATEFUL

When I came home, a number of judges told my lawyers in Philly that they wanted to meet me. I went to see one of them. I walked into the office and he told me, "You've got a job here. You can start whenever you want." It's a temporary, six-month job. I started on October 17.



Recently I received my first paycheck. It was great! I bought new furniture for my place. But I don't know how to shop yet; everything is too big for my house! I bought an entertainment center—it takes up the entire wall.

I want to thank every person who supported the Innocence Project throughout the entire time of my case. I want to thank them for enabling the project to do its work. The people there—they are my family. Nina Morrison, my Innocence Project attorney, put in countless hours on my case. There's nothing I can say to thank her; anything I'd say would be an understatement. I can't put it into words.

When we hear the news, there are so many terrible things that we hear about happening in the world and in our communities. But so far, I've experienced the opposite. People have been so kind and so warm toward me—so gracious toward me. I'm grateful to all those people.

People have never been so kind to me. Even on the street, wherever I go, people hug me or they want to shake my hand. It's so humbling to me because I'm no different from anybody else.

When I tell people that I'm the luckiest guy in the world, they look at me like, "Yeah, right," and they laugh. But people don't have an idea, man. I am the luckiest man in the world, and not just for one reason, but for a whole lot of reasons. This is my life. ■

“I want to thank every person who supported the Innocence Project throughout the entire time of my case. I want to thank them for enabling the project to do its work.”

—Anthony Wright



Opposite page, left to right: Wright, with his family and attorneys by his side, took a victory lap following his release from prison; (top) Anthony Wright Jr. hugs Innocence Project Senior Attorney Nina Morrison following his father being acquitted; Peter Neufeld spoke with jurors immediately following their verdict.

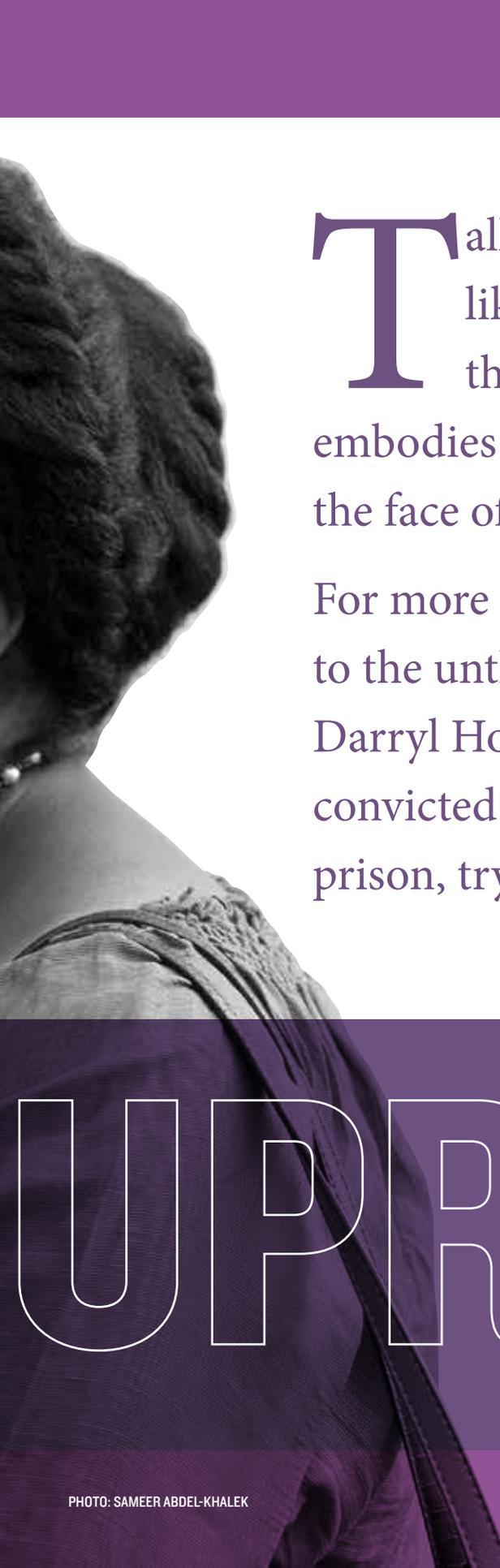
PHOTO: KEVIN MONKO

This page: Wright with his girlfriend Tameka at an Innocence Project event in November.

PHOTO: MATTEDESIGN



A LOVES



Talking to Nannie Howard is like having a conversation with the person you want to be. She embodies grace, humor and true grit in the face of inexplicable hardship.

For more than 20 years, Nannie woke up to the unthinkable: the man she loved—Darryl Howard—had been wrongfully convicted in North Carolina and was in prison, trying to regain his freedom.

UPREME



Nannie and Darryl Howard on the day his conviction was vacated and he was released from prison in August 2016.

PHOTO: SAMEER ABDEL-KHALEK

From the day that Darryl was convicted, Nannie made a personal choice—a decades-long commitment to be Darryl’s partner and ally—that had as much to do with her deep love for Darryl as it did with her being true to herself and her character.

“I knew, I just knew that this man was innocent and there was no way that I could feel good about the person I am if I continued to live my life and allowed him to sit there without doing anything,” says Nannie. “I was not just going to be a bystander while his life was being destroyed. I was taught to love, honor and respect people.”

In 1998, she and Darryl were married. Their wedding took place in prison. A picture from the day looks almost like that of a traditional wedding portrait with Nannie dressed in a wedding dress,

her arms draped around Darryl—also in white—and holding a small bouquet.

And in the many years that followed, Nannie was steadfast and deliberate in her fight for his justice and in sharing her life with him, not knowing when he would ever be released. In fact, she was so dogged in her commitment that the example she sets seems nearly impossible to follow.

But Nannie is the first person to say that she is not an exception. “You would do it, too, if you had to. You would,” she insists. And through her words, she offers strong reinforcement to others living through wrongful convictions themselves. She also challenges all of us to think about how far we might push ourselves not just for love, but for the pursuit of truth and justice.

It all started for Nannie in 1995 in Durham, North Carolina. Darryl was on trial for the 1991 double homicide of his acquaintance Doris Washington and her 13-year-old daughter Nishonda. Police found the mother and daughter dead in Washington's bed. There was evidence that they'd been sexually assaulted.

There was no physical evidence linking Darryl to the crime, but he became the prime suspect because he and Washington knew one another and because he'd had previous arrests, most of them drug-related.

Darryl and Nannie met in 1988. Despite them being what Nannie calls "complete opposites," they formed a quick bond. And over the years, they'd drifted in and out of romantic involvement. But through it all, they loved one another.

At the time of the trial, they were facing hard times in their relationship; they weren't on speaking terms, says Nannie. But as a testament to their friendship, she was sure to show Darryl her support, each day making her way to the courtroom.

And if Darryl ever needed support, it was in the days of that problematic trial.

In 1993, the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation examined rape kits from the victims that had been performed during the investigation, and discovered sperm in the youngest victim's rectum and vagina—clear evidence that she'd been sexually assaulted at the time of the crime. At trial, however, then-Durham District Attorney Mike Nifong and the lead detective on the case, Darryl Dowdy, argued

that no sexual assault had occurred. Rather, they said, the sperm indicated that the young girl was promiscuous.

The truth was, if Nifong and Dowdy had conceded that sexual assault had occurred, it would have destroyed their case against Darryl, who had been excluded as the source of the sperm through DNA testing.

Ultimately, the crux of the state's case rested on the testimony of several unreliable witnesses who gave inconsistent accounts that they'd seen Darryl threaten Washington shortly before she was murdered. Regardless of the unreliable information, Darryl was convicted of murder and arson and sentenced to 80 years in prison.

Based on the weak evidence that was presented at trial, but also based on who she knew Darryl to be, Nannie knew that Darryl had been wrongly convicted.

"I remember that one of the weekends soon after Darryl was sentenced, I scheduled a visit to see him," explains Nannie. "When I saw him, I asked him point blank, 'Did you do it?' He said 'No.' I knew in my heart that he was being honest and that he wasn't capable of something like that."

But perhaps as important to Nannie as her intuition were facts that armed her with the truth. Prior to meeting with Darryl, Nannie tracked down two of the witnesses who'd testified against Darryl at trial.

"Even though I knew within my heart that he wasn't capable of [doing] what they'd accused him of, I still needed to verify that in some way," she explains.

"I was not just going to be a bystander while his life was being destroyed. I was taught to love, honor and respect people."

—Nannie Howard

“My wife supports me. That’s the only thing that helps me. I think that without her, I would have gone crazy.”

—Darryl Howard

“I don’t intimidate easily, but I’m a simple country girl. I remember thinking at the time that I was so out of my element. But I had a purpose and I was going to achieve my goal,” recalls Nannie.

The women told her that they’d lied in their testimony, one of them out of pressure from the prosecution. One of them even signed an affidavit that Nannie gave her, which stated that her testimony was fabricated.

“When I went to see Darryl [on that first visit], I told him ‘I know they lied on you and I believe you,’” she says. “I said, ‘I will stay with you until this is resolved.’ I wanted him to be free. I just didn’t think that it was fair that he would have to endure this alone. I made a promise to him on that day that I would be there for him until he was released.”

Darryl himself recalled the conversation in a 2014 interview with the *Innocence Project in Print*.

“She told me, ‘I’m not going to stop fighting this until you get out.’ And she worked on the case ever since. She’s a very special person.”

In the first years that Darryl was in prison, she and Darryl devised a plan to get help. They decided to reach out to as many lawyers as possible who could offer pro bono assistance. They believed that, surely, someone would see the blatant corruption in Darryl’s case and be compelled to argue for his freedom.

“That’s when the fighting started,” explained Darryl in 2014.

They wrote a letter detailing the case. Nannie mailed that letter to every law school in the country. And then they waited. Finally, in 2004, the Innocence Project took on the case.

Knowing that there was a legal team that was dedicating its time and resources to exposing the truth in Darryl’s case and winning back his freedom infused Nannie and Darryl with renewed hope. But their test was far from over. It would still take another 12 years of work before Darryl would eventually see justice. And during that time, there were other tragedies they would be forced to weather, such as the 2015 death of Darryl’s son to an apparent drug overdose.

According to Darryl, the only way that he survived all those years was Nannie.

Darryl said in 2014: “My wife supports me. That’s the only thing that helps me. I think that without her, I would have gone crazy.”

“I was his connection to the outside world,” Nannie explains.

For that reason, in the years that the Innocence Project worked on Darryl’s case, Nannie went to great lengths to take steps that would, as much as possible, draw them together as a couple and cause them to rely on one another.

That meant Nannie making every effort to see Darryl when she could.

“I went out of my way to never miss a visit because it was important to him. And I had to see him,” she recalls. “The entire time that Darryl was incarcerated, I missed two to three visits.”

She was also very deliberate about incorporating Darryl, as much as possible, into her own life. In doing so, says Nannie, Darryl still played a meaningful role in their marriage.

“One of the things that anyone going through this has to realize is that you don’t stop living, but at the same time, you live your life as though you were a couple,” Nannie explains. “So you do things that you would normally do if your husband was standing by you or with you.”

Also, she says, regular communication was key. “Every decision that I thought would impact us then or in the future—because I knew we had a future together—I would discuss it with Darryl,” she explains. “I didn’t want him to think that I’d created a world that he did not exist in or that he only existed when I showed up to see him.”

At one point, she purchased a new home. Darryl was involved at every step of the process “At the end, I had paperwork drawn up. I went to the prison and got permission for him to sign all the documents,” she recounts. “And I remember giving

him a key to the house because in my mind I thought, “This is my husband, he should have a house key.”

For years, the key functioned as only a symbol of what could be for both Darryl and Nannie, that is, until last summer. Finally, Darryl had his homecoming.

Last August, the Innocence Project went back to court in North Carolina for an evidentiary hearing to convince the court that Darryl should be released on bail. DNA testing from Doris Washington’s rape kit had excluded Howard and matched to a career criminal with over 35 prior convictions. Also, there was testing of the younger victim’s rape kit, which identified a second male profile that again excluded Howard.

Nannie stepped into the courtroom, ready for the fight ahead.

“I had put my shields up. I was there to support Darryl and to let everyone know who was watching that he was not in this alone. I wanted to let them know that he was valued and that he was needed; that there are people—family—that want this man out,” she says.

Two days into what was supposed to be at least a three-day hearing, Darryl was released. North Carolina Superior Court Judge Orlando Hudson vacated Darryl’s convictions based on the new DNA evidence.

Nannie describes her reaction in the courtroom as the judge announced his decision. “I didn’t take my eyes off of him because



Nannie and Darryl Howard joyfully embrace on the day that he was finally released from prison based on DNA evidence which proved that he was innocent of a double murder in North Carolina. PHOTO: SAMEER ABDEL-KHALEK

I wanted to let him see me and I wanted to see him because we did this. We fought so hard for this.”

Days after Darryl was released, prosecutors announced that they were dismissing all charges against him. He was fully exonerated. Nannie captured a photo of Darryl at the moment he received the news that they’d both waited so long to hear. In the picture, he is holding one hand over his mouth, suspended in disbelief.

Several weeks following the exoneration, Nannie and Darryl celebrated their 18th year wedding anniversary. Although they’ve been married for nearly two decades, it was the first time that they’ve ever been able to spend their anniversary together.

It’s now been almost six months since Darryl was exonerated. The newly reunited couple are doing their best to take their new life in stride.

Darryl has been working and in January was interviewing for a second job. Nannie herself has a busy work life, overseeing a division of Xerox at Duke University.

“Of course, the exoneration is hard. We’re still getting use to him being out. And there’s still a lot to do,” she says.

But Nannie isn’t afraid. The past 25 years are a testimony to that.

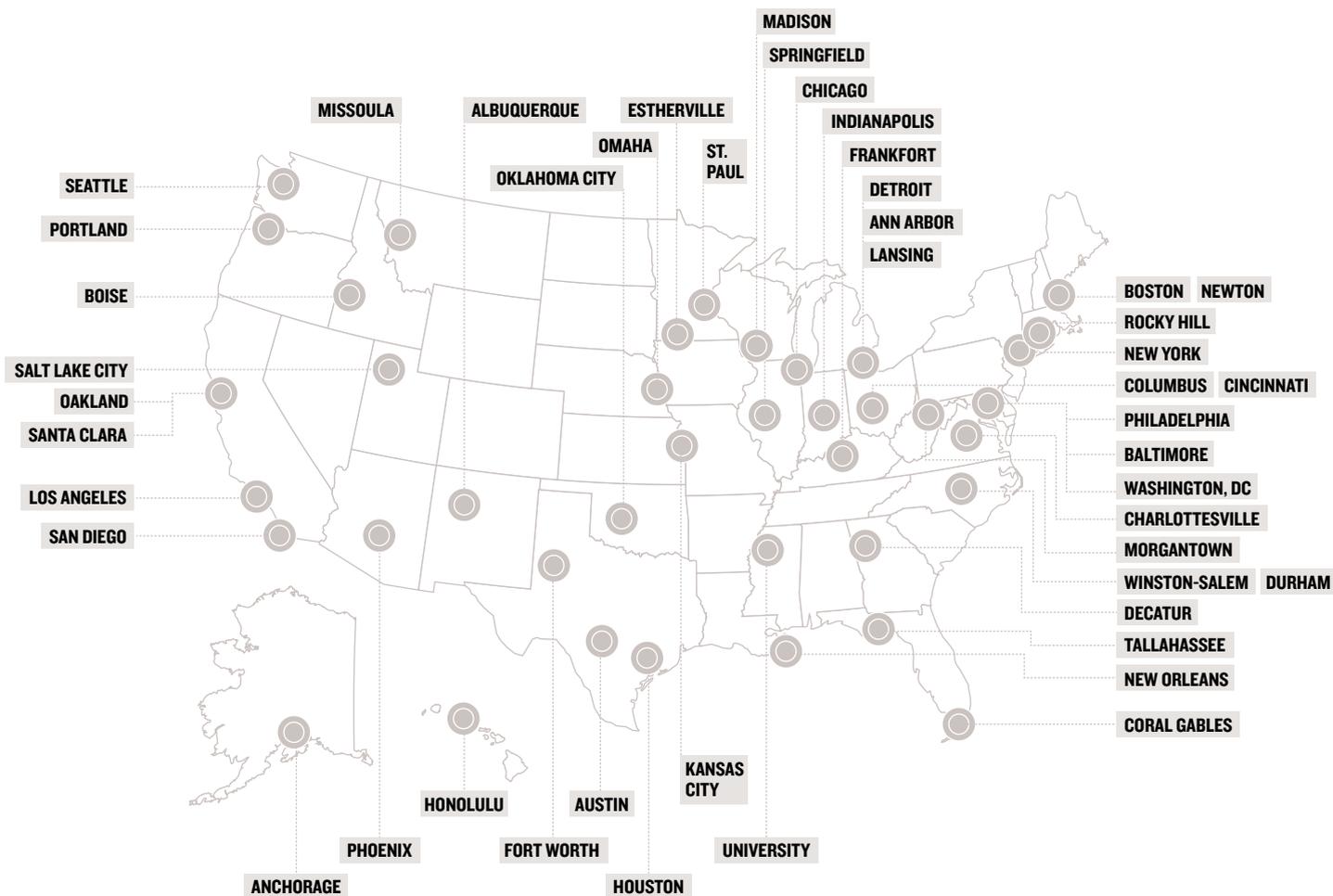
“Oh my God, we did it. We did it. Against the odds, against everything—we did this. We’re still together.” ■

JUST THE FACTS

INNOCENCE WORK ACROSS THE COUNTRY: THE INNOCENCE NETWORK

Did you know that the Innocence Project is a founding member and the headquarters of the Innocence Network, a coalition of independent organizations around the globe that provides free legal services to innocent people wrongly convicted of crimes?

Check out the map below to see the cities where members are working.
Learn more here: <http://innocencenetwork.org/members/#networkmap>





OCTOBER 16, 2016:

JOAN BAEZ RALLIES SUPPORT AROUND FIGHTING WRONGFUL CONVICTION

On this day, friends of the Innocence Project traveled to Montclair, New Jersey, for a special concert by folk music legend and longtime activist Joan Baez. It was a magical evening. Baez's lyrical music was as moving and powerful as always. And she educated the listeners about how the Innocence Project's pursuit for justice mirrors her own. Following the show, she joined fans from the Innocence Project for a group photo. Thank you, Joan!

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The Innocence Project was founded in 1992 by Barry C. Scheck and Peter J. Neufeld at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University to assist prisoners who could be proven innocent through DNA testing. To date, more than 300 people in the United States have been exonerated by DNA testing, including 20 who served time on death row. These people served an average of 14 years in prison before exoneration and release. The Innocence Project's full-time staff attorneys and Cardozo clinic students provided direct representation or critical assistance in most of these cases. The Innocence Project's groundbreaking use of DNA technology to free innocent people has provided irrefutable proof that wrongful convictions are not isolated or rare events but instead arise from systemic defects. Now an independent nonprofit organization closely affiliated with Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University, the Innocence Project's mission is nothing less than to free the staggering number of innocent people who remain incarcerated and to bring substantive reform to the system responsible for their unjust imprisonment.



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