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Larry Youngblood

Time Served: 15 years

Larry Youngblood was wrongly convicted in 1985 of child molestation, sexual assault, and kidnapping, and spent a total of nine years in prison before he was fully exonerated of the crimes.

In October 1983, a ten year old boy was abducted from a carnival in Pima County, Arizona, and was molested and sodomized by an unknown man. The victim was taken to a hospital, where the staff collected semen samples as well as the clothing he was wearing at the time of the assault.

Investigation and Trial

Based on the victim's description of the assailant – a middle-aged black man with one disfigured eye – Larry Youngblood, who was black and had a bad left eye, became a suspect. He was put in a photo lineup and the victim identified him as the perpetrator.

Youngblood maintained his innocence at trial, but the jury convicted him, based largely on the eyewitness identification of the victim. He was sentenced to ten years and six months in prison.

No serological tests were conducted before trial, as the police improperly stored the evidence and it had degraded.

Post-Conviction Investigation

Larry Youngblood appealed his conviction, claiming the destruction of potentially exculpatory evidence violated his due process rights, and the Arizona Court of Appeals set aside his conviction. He was released from prison, three years into his sentence, but in 1988, the Supreme Court reversed the lower court's ruling, and his conviction was reinstated (*Arizona v. Youngblood*, 488 U.S. 51). Youngblood remained free as the case made its way through the Arizona appellate court system a second time, but returned to prison in 1993, when the Arizona Supreme Court reinstated his conviction.

In 1998, Youngblood was released on parole, but was sent back to prison in 1999 for failing to register his new address, as required by Arizona sex offender laws. In 2000, upon request from his attorneys, Scott McNamara and Carol Wittels, with the Innocence Project acting as a consult, the police department tested the degraded evidence using new, sophisticated DNA technology. Those results exonerated Youngblood, and he was released from prison in August 2000. The district attorney's office formally dismissed the charges against Youngblood later that year.

Shortly thereafter, the DNA profile from the evidence was entered into the national convicted offender database. In early 2001, officials got a hit, matching the profile of Walter Cruise, who is blind in one eye and is currently serving time in Texas on unrelated charges. In August 2002, Cruise was convicted of the crime and sentenced to 24 years in prison.

Sadly, Youngblood died in 2007, without receiving any compensation for his wrongful conviction.

State: Arizona

Charge: Sexual Assault, Kidnapping, Child Molestation

Conviction: Sexual Assault, Kidnapping, Child Molestation

Sentence: 10.5 years

Incident Date: 10/29/83

Conviction Date: 02/08/85

Exoneration Date: 08/10/00

Served: 15 years

Race of Defendant: African American

Status: Exonerated by DNA

Contributing Causes of Conviction: Eyewitness Misidentification

Race of Victim: Latino

Death Penalty Case: no

Accused Plead Guilty: No

Real Perpetrator Convicted of Subsequent Crime: No

Compensation: Not Yet

Innocence Project Involved: Yes

The Alternative Perpetrator Identified: Yes

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Help us prevent wrongful convictions like this one, and improve our justice system.

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FEATURED CASES

Time Served: 25 years



(<https://www.innocenceproject.org/cases/anthony-wright-exonerated/>)

Andre Hatchett

Time Served: 25 years



(<https://www.innocenceproject.org/cases/andre-hatchett/>)

Timothy Bridges

Time Served: 25 years



(<https://www.innocenceproject.org/cases/timothy-bridges/>)

Randall Mills

Time Served: 14 years



(<https://www.innocenceproject.org/cases/randall-mills/>)

Korey Wise

Time Served: 12 years



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Kenny Waters

Time Served: 18 years



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Michael Morton

Time Served: 24 years



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Time Served: 20 years



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Kennedy Brewer

Time Served: 13 years



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Kirk Bloodsworth

Time Served: 8 years



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