

No Place Like Home: Five Exonerees Reflect on Life Before and After Wrongful Conviction

In a series of candid sit-down interviews, five recently exonerated people reflect on what living free has meant to them.

01.14.25 | By Justin Chan



Renay Lynch and her son Rinaldo Moss (Image: Courtesy of the Innocence Project)

One hundred and four years. That's the staggering amount of time stolen from just five of our recently exonerated clients: [Tyrone Day](https://innocenceproject.org/tyrone-day-exonerated-in-dallas-33-years-after-wrongful-conviction/) (<https://innocenceproject.org/tyrone-day-exonerated-in-dallas-33-years-after-wrongful-conviction/>), [Rosa Jimenez](https://innocenceproject.org/rosa-jimenez-is-exonerated-of-a-crime-that-never-took-place-after-20-years/) (<https://innocenceproject.org/rosa-jimenez-is-exonerated-of-a-crime-that-never-took-place-after-20-years/>), [Leonard Mack](https://innocenceproject.org/hit-in-dna-database-proves-leonard-macks-innocence-after-47-years-of-wrongful-conviction/) (<https://innocenceproject.org/hit-in-dna-database-proves-leonard-macks-innocence-after-47-years-of-wrongful-conviction/>), [Perry Lott](https://innocenceproject.org/perry-lott-is-exonerated-after-35-years-of-wrongful-conviction-in-ada-oklahoma/) (<https://innocenceproject.org/perry-lott-is-exonerated-after-35-years-of-wrongful-conviction-in-ada-oklahoma/>), and [Renay Lynch](https://innocenceproject.org/renay-lynch-is-exonerated-after-nearly-26-years-of-wrongful-conviction-in-buffalo-new-york/) (<https://innocenceproject.org/renay-lynch-is-exonerated-after-nearly-26-years-of-wrongful-conviction-in-buffalo-new-york/>). For decades, they were separated from their loved ones for crimes they did not commit — or that never took place — but they held onto hope that one day their innocence would be proven. Now free, they are rebuilding relationships and healing from the years they lost.

In our powerful series, ["Homecoming: Rebuilding a Life After Wrongful Conviction,"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILtLULaAl2g) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILtLULaAl2g>) each exoneree shares what life was like before they were wrongly convicted and what it means now to return home in a world that has profoundly changed in their absence. For some, nurturing bonds with their children has brought an unexpected mix of joy and challenges. For others, even something as simple as choosing between items in a department store as a free person has triggered deep, previously untapped emotions.

Hear more from our exonerees, whose stories of resilience propel our work forward and inspire us every day.

Tyrone Day

In May 2023, Tyrone Day was finally exonerated after the Dallas County district attorney dismissed his 1990 sexual assault charge based on new evidence of his innocence. He had pleaded guilty to the crime under the impression that he would reunite with his daughters after serving four years in prison, but, instead, he served nearly 26 years.

Now a horticulturist at [Restorative Farms](https://www.restorativefarms.org/) (<https://www.restorativefarms.org/>), a nonprofit he helped establish, Mr. Day reflects on how his grandmother's early gardening lessons have guided him toward a fulfilling and meaningful life beyond prison walls.

Rosa Jimenez

In 2003, Rosa Jimenez, a mother to a one-year-old daughter and seven months pregnant, was

arrested after a child in her care accidentally choked on paper towels. Following the child's death, she was charged with murder. While awaiting trial, she gave birth to her son Emmanuel and held him for just five hours before he and his sister were taken away and placed in foster care.

Ms. Jimenez spent 17 years in prison before she was released in 2021. Here, she discusses what it means to be a mother again to her children, who have since grown up and forged their own paths in life.

Leonard Mack

Forty-seven years after being wrongly convicted of rape in New York, Leonard Mack, a Vietnam War veteran, was exonerated in 2023 thanks to new DNA testing of crime scene evidence. To date, his wrongful conviction is the longest-known case to be overturned based on new DNA evidence by the Innocence Project.

Although he was released seven-and-a-half years after his conviction, Mr. Mack was haunted for decades by it — and his mother, sister, and daughter never lived to see him exonerated. In this interview, he shares the pain of living with a wrongful conviction for almost half a century and the peace he has found since his exoneration.

Perry Lott

Perry Lott was passionate about illustrations before a 1988 rape conviction upended his life in Oklahoma. Despite the absence of physical evidence connecting him to the crime, he was convicted solely based on the survivors' identification of him. He subsequently spent 30 years in prison before he was released in 2018. In 2023, the district attorney's office accepted the post-conviction DNA test results that proved his innocence and vacated his conviction.

During his incarceration, Mr. Lott leaned heavily on his faith and art to get through his toughest times. In this emotional interview, he recalls the trauma he experienced and how he has chosen to, as he puts it, "rise above it."

Renay Lynch

In 2024, Renay Lynch became the 250th person to be freed by the Innocence Project since the organization's founding in 1992. Wrongly convicted of a 1995 murder and robbery in New York, she spent 24 years in prison. She was released in January 2022, and continued to fight for her innocence. Post-conviction reexamination of crime scene fingerprint evidence ultimately led to her

exoneration.

Throughout her incarceration, Ms. Lynch remained not only a mother figure to her own children but also to other women in prison. In this interview, she discusses her wrongful conviction's impact on her relationship with her son and daughter, and how they played a crucial role in helping her find the strength to endure more than two decades of wrongful imprisonment.

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Nancy McCutcheon

February 11, 2025 at 6:32 pm

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I have followed the Innocence Project for many years and hold the highest regard for all that you do. If only there wasn't a need for your work!! To hear these brave people tell their stories is heartbreaking yet mixed with the wonderful news that they now are home and still have time now to be with some of their loved ones. Thank you for all that you do. Thanks to those who told their incredible stories.

Patricia Warman

February 10, 2025 at 1:10 pm

[Reply](#)

Thank you so much for the courage of each one of you who shared this sad and tragic story of each of your lives interrupted by injustice. My prayers will be with all of you and all those still

incarcerated, until justice truly does reign
