



January 2015

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Defenders of the Innocent event - April 8

Please join the Illinois Innocence Project at our **Defenders of the Innocent event on April 8** to celebrate Illinois' recent eyewitness identification reforms, signed into law in 2014.

Our featured speakers, Jennifer Thompson and exoneree Ronald Cotton, were victims of a faulty eyewitness identification process after Jennifer was brutally raped as a college student. She unintentionally misidentified Ronald as her perpetrator. He spent 11 years in prison until DNA proved his innocence.

Jennifer and Ronald now are lifelong friends and in 2010 co-authored the book Picking Cotton. **Watch the trailer of their story at www.pickingcottonbook.com.**

This is a rare opportunity to hear from these nationally recognized innocence advocates. Join us!

PUBLIC HEARINGS UPDATE

The Project presented executive clemency petitions to the Illinois Prisoner Review Board (PRB) on behalf of Anthony Murray and Teshome Campbell. Anthony spoke passionately about his struggles to prove his innocence and rebuild his life.

The PRB's confidential recommendations on these petitions will be sent to Governor Bruce Rauner. Thank you to all supporters who attended these hearings!

STAFF NEWS

We are thrilled to announce our part-time **Chicago attorney, Lauren Kaeseberg, has joined the Project full time**, with the help of a generous gift from a Chicago law firm. Lauren is now handling a full caseload of Chicago-area and northern Illinois cases. In the case of one man who is entering his 30th year in prison, recent DNA testing on crime scene evidence has excluded him. Lauren is working hard to obtain this client's release within the next few months.

Pictured here is Lauren with her long-time client Bennie Starks on January 7, 2013, the day he was exonerated in Lake County, Ill., after fighting for 25 years to prove his innocence (*Chicago Tribune photo*).

Before coming to the Illinois Innocence Project, Lauren practiced criminal defense in the Chicago area at the trial, appellate and post-conviction levels, including on a number of high-profile cases. She has been involved in actual innocence litigation for the last decade, having interned in New York with Innocence Project founders Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld for two years as a law student. Lauren's presence underscores the **Illinois Innocence Project's statewide reach**. She is a critical part of our legal team and we are lucky to have her.