



November 2014

ANTHONY MURRAY – SUPPORT HIS PETITION FOR CLEMENCY

Anthony Murray is free from prison but still carries the heavy weight of a wrongful, although lesser, conviction. Please support his clemency petition to the Illinois Prisoner Review Board to clear his record of a murder he did not commit.

Anthony was wrongfully convicted of first-degree murder in 1998. He endured two trials in which the guilty verdicts were overturned due to flaws in the justice system – a compromised juror, conflicting witness testimony and ineffective assistance from his defense counsel.

In 2012, the Illinois Innocence Project presented new evidence that won Anthony yet another trial. In a surprise move, the Marion County prosecutor approached Anthony with the “Alford Plea.” This seldom-used plea bargain would allow him to maintain his innocence and walk out of prison after 14 years, 3 months and 10 days. But there was a catch. Anthony would need to plead guilty to second-degree murder in exchange for his release. He had a decision to make – risk trial or accept the plea bargain. While incarcerated, Anthony had remained close to his family in weekly phone calls to his mother. During that time, 16 of his family members died, including his father and three grandparents. Anthony knew he was innocent but the prospect of an upstate black man facing another predominately white jury in southern Illinois was daunting considering his two previous trials. Before entering the courtroom to give the judge his decision, he saw the pain and anguish on his mother’s face, and knew he needed to go home. He made his decision and accepted the Alford Plea.

In October, Anthony completed two years’ probation as a condition of his release. But his life has been far from easy. The 2012 conviction of second-degree murder makes it appear as if he is guilty of committing a recent and egregious crime. Employment has been difficult. UPS and the Chicago Transit Authority denied hiring Anthony through their ex-offenders program due to his “recent” conviction. Union trade programs and even a commercial truck driver training program also refused him. Anthony’s 2012 conviction leaves him with limited possibilities. He wants to establish a career, financially support his family and move them out of their dangerous Chicago neighborhood. And he wants to work with young men facing the same problems he faced at their age.

If granted clemency, Anthony’s 2012 conviction – for a crime he did not commit – will be removed from his record. Only then will Anthony truly be free.

So, how can you help?

Stand with Anthony by adding your name in support of his clemency petition at change.org. Stand with Anthony by attending his public hearing before the Prisoner Review Board on January 13, 2015, at 9:00 a.m. in the Author’s Room at the Illinois State Library, 300 S. Second Street, Springfield, Ill.

To learn more about Anthony and IIP’s role in his case, go to:
<http://www.uis.edu/innocenceproject/cases/exonorees/anthonymurray/>

STAFF CHANGES

Rhonda Gail Keech

In October, Rhonda resigned as IIP Case Coordinator to pursue work in a related field. Rhonda was the first paid staff member, joining the Project in September 2008 after completing her master's degree in legal studies at UIS. Her contributions to the operation of what first was known as the "Downstate Illinois Innocence Project" and now is the "Illinois Innocence Project" were invaluable. IIP credits much of its success to Rhonda and wishes her the best.

Ronda Alders

IIP welcomes Ronda Alders as a part-time clerical assistant. She has worked as a legal secretary in Springfield law offices for many years, and brings a wealth of experience to many areas of our work.

YOU CAN HELP THE INNOCENT

Remember IIP in your end-of-year giving

The Illinois Innocence Project needs your continuing support to help people like Anthony Murray (featured above). As we approach the end of the year, please keep IIP on your list to provide desperately needed resources. To make a gift, go to: <http://www.uis.edu/innocenceproject/>