

NATIONAL INNOCENCE CONFERENCE

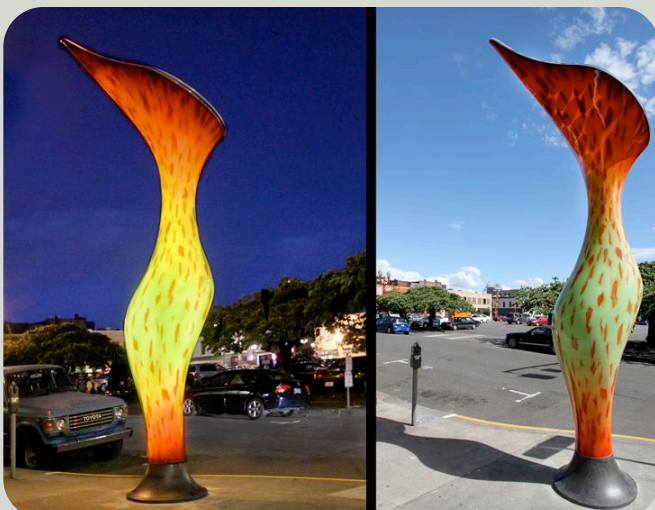
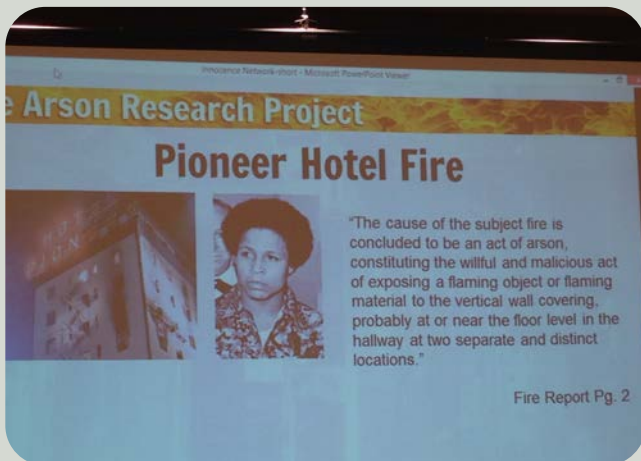
Note from Lesley Hoyt-Croft:

The conference serves many purposes: It educates attorneys on cases of federal habeas or filing amicus briefs, for example; also on topics such as the latest research in DNA, scientific advances in areas in which people are typically wrongfully convicted; communicating with the media; starting an innocence project and issues with funding; legislative reform and it also presents awards to those who have achieved much in the field (See Bottom Right and Next Page):

I went to the Conference for a couple of reasons, both having to do with my pro bono work as the documentarian for the Arizona Justice Project. I filmed our two Arizona exonerees and their attorneys in the triumph of being at the conference and I also went to sessions having to do with scientific advances in fire science, which will come into play in the **Louis Taylor** documentary. I also got interviews from the two leading experts in the country on this subject so I was very excited about that.



← This is **Paul Bieber**, who did a session called, “**Anatomy of a Wrongful Conviction: Common Causes and True Costs of Junk Fire Science.**” Louis Taylor’s case was cited as one of the most egregious (42 years in prison) ... another resulted in an execution..



Andrew Cohen won the Innocence Network Journalism Award for his series, “A Ghost of Mississippi,” which appeared in The Atlantic in May of 2013.

He cited a quote in his speech that I really love:
“On the good days you are bringing justice to an unjust situation. On the bad days, you are bearing witness.”

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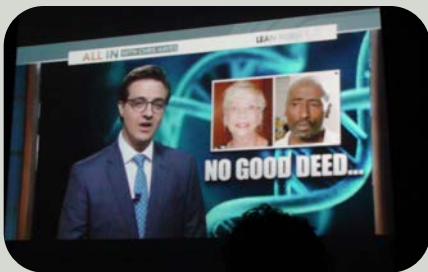
Ronald Cotton Jennifer Thompson

Jennifer Thompson received the Champion of Justice Award this year. She was brutally raped when she was a 22 yr. old college student and her misidentification and then her compelling testimony sent a young man, Ronald Cotton, to a life term in prison. He was eventually freed due to newly developed DNA tests when the real rapist was identified. Their joint memoir of tragedy and forgiveness is a NY Times bestseller (Picking Cotton) and together they lobby legislatures to abolish the death penalty, work to revise eye-witness procedures and try to change compensation laws. They also speak on programs such as 20/20, NPR, Oprah and 60 Minutes about race, class, judicial reform, human error, and forgiveness.

The conference also serves to give exonerees a forum to come together and talk about their experiences both in prison and since their release (and plan for the future) ... it recognizes and honors exonerees from this year and then exonerees from past years with a short video clip telling their story and how long they were incarcerated. At the end, all the exonerees and some of their family members are up on the stage celebrating and singing and it is a powerful moment for everyone.



There is a real “fear factor” present ... this many absolutely innocent people who have spent so much time in prison is a cause to worry. “It couldn’t happen to me?” It could.



OUR GUYS IN THE BACKGROUND

OUR EXONEREES



Our two Arizona exonerees at the conference this year: **Drayton Witt** and **Khalil Rushdan**. They never met in prison but have become friends since being released.



The guy in the middle isn't one of ours, but he is a friend of theirs

Drayton spent 11.5 years in prison and has deep scars on his neck, head, shoulders and back from being stabbed 73 times. Khalil was in prison for 15 years. Both guys were released in the last 2.5 years.



SOME of Drayton's 73 stab wounds. He almost died from this attack.



Drayton and Khalil are real Justice Project success stories. Drayton has his own painting business which has really taken off and Khalil is driving big-rig trucks across the country, loving it, and plans to buy a house next year.

THE ARIZONA CONTINGENT (SORT OF)

(L to R) Carrie, now head of the Innocence Project at the Law School in Madison, Wisconsin; Kindra (AJP) Lesley (Az); Lindsay, now in D.C.. doing innocence work; Maria, Drayton and Baby Elli Witt. Missing are Amanda Hammond (AJP) who was visiting her sister and Khalil Rushdan, who hadn't yet arrived.



This is Nick O'Connell, who works with exonerees through Centurian Ministries. His dad, Frank, is an exoneree.

The people at the Conference in the news now

LINDSAY DOES EVERYTHING WELL... EXCEPT BOWLING



Drayton Witt really wanted a picture with Amanda Knox who spent several years in prison in Italy.

Amanda Knox

Our Az contingent challenged Ryan F. and his dad and their two friends to bowling. Thanks to Nick O'Connell from Princeton (see pic above right) and especially Khalil, our team kicked butt. Kindra was actually pretty good but she has the weirdest "approach" ever!



Ryan Ferguson



Khalil, AKA, Rick James.

Khalil grew up by a bowling alley but didn't have the money to bowl. Instead, he would run through the alley, throw a ball down the lane, and run out the other side. His odd practicing paid off.



Lane 6				
	Hdp	Scr	HdpT	TOT
Lindsay	0	63	0	63
Nick	0	136	0	136
Kindra	0	101	0	101
Rick James	0	196	0	196
Total				
Handic				
HDPCP Total				
		496		496

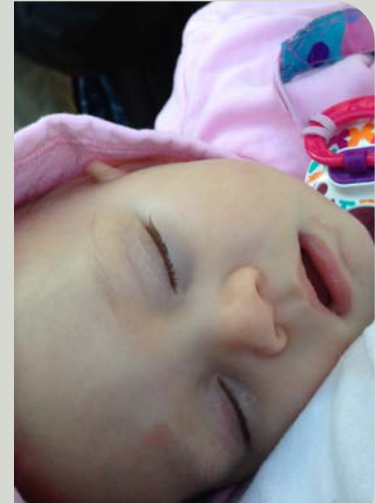
THE BABY

Miss Elli Mae Justice Witt

Drayton, walking along the streets of Portland carrying the baby bag. Now that is a study in contrasts!



Proud parents, Drayton and Maria Witt



We kind of thought this baby might end up in Carrie Sperling's suitcase. They had something going on.



Elli Mae Justice Witt ... How perfect is that? The "Justice" in her name is specifically in honor of the Az. JUSTICE Project



Elli was the "hit" of the conference



ROCK BOTTOM BAR - THE EXONEREE BAND

At the end of the conference on the last night, everyone gathered at a bar to hear the Exoneree Band. None of the guys knew each other before and are from all over the country, yet they came together and formed a fantastic band.

This guy is Antoine Day and he was in prison for 19 years for a crime he didn't commit. He was exonerated after 10 years but then it took another 9 years for him to be released. (You got me).

WE REALLY ARE DIFFERENT

People were joining the band on the stage and there was a black woman in a vivid tangerine dress which was kind of short and showed off her ample assets. Antoine said, "Get up here you big-thighed mama." She seemed flattered, smiled broadly, and continued her ascent onto the stage.

If that was a white girl, she would have run out of the bar crying and would never be seen in public again.



<http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2012/11/13/freedom-lost-and-won-exonerees-sing-their-story>



INTENSE!



http://www.innocenceproject.org/Content/Raymond_Towler.php

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/18/william-dillon-wrongly-convicted-national-anthem-tampa-bay-rays_n_1683772.html

His name is Raymond Towler and he served 28 years in prison before being exonerated by DNA.

PORTLAND: THE VENUE ITSELF

This was the scenery flying into Portland. The picture was taken from the plane and the clear skies were an adumbration of the perfect weather to come.



Pioneer Square

Bottom left: Bronze Elephant Sculpture Xiang bao bao (Baby Elephant), symbolizes that offspring shall be safe and prosperous.

Bottom Right: Water fountain art (recycling, of course!)



The most famous place in Portland

VOODOO DONUTS



Don't come home without 'em

PORTLAND CRACK
Despite our failure to get the actual donuts, we were able to get pictures of the donuts from people we accosted walking down the street with their boxes.



HOW THE DONUT DREAM CRUMBLES
WHEN ANDY SILVERMAN, U OF AZ. LAW PROFESSOR, HEARD WE WERE GOING TO BE IN
PORTLAND, HE TOLD US TO GO TO VODOO DONUTS AND HE WOULD FOOT THE BILL.
THIS SOUNDED GOOD TO US AND WE HAD IT ALL PLANNED OUT ABOUT JUST
HOW BIG THAT DONUT BILL WOULD BE.
OUR STRATEGY WAS TWARTED HOWEVER, WHEN THERE WAS AN HOUR WAIT IN THE DONUT LINE!



Random Pics



Drayton Witt



Kindra, Alissa Bjerkhoel (law school friend of Lindsay's) and L. Herfie



Heidi Cruz
Lindsav and Khalil



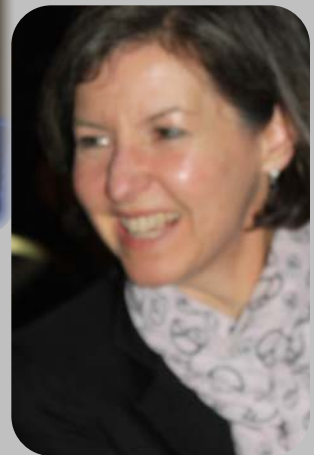
Amanda and Lindsav



Amanda Hammond



Kindra Helferich



Carrie Sperling



Khalil Rushdan



Lindsay and Kindra

Random Pics



Kindra Helferich



Drayton, Lesley and Khalil



Lindsay H. and Carrie S.



Khalil Rushdan



Vanessa Buch and Kindra H.



Lindsay, Khalil and Carrie



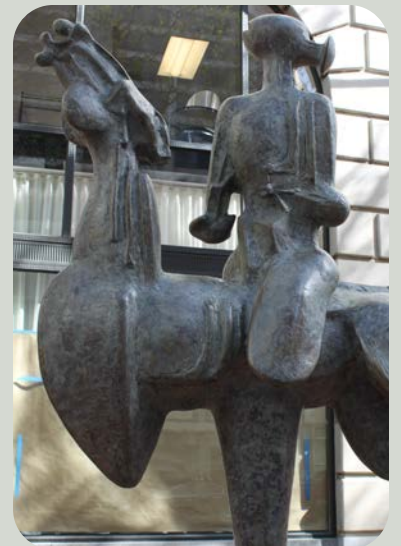
Drayton
Witt



Amanda, Lindsay, Vanessa and Kindra



Maria and Elli and Carrie



Maria Witt



Drayton Witt



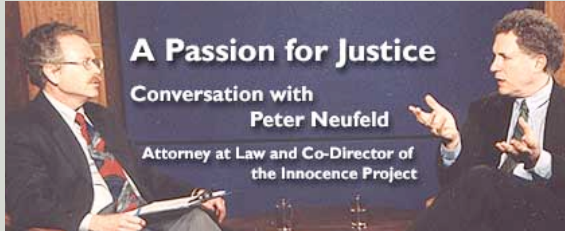
Vanessa Buch and L. Hoyt-Croft

THE LEGENDS (FROM THE EAST)



Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld are the co-founders of the Innocence Project at the Cordozo School of Law in New York. Our exonerees wanted their pictures taken with Barry Scheck when he came by the table.

"Every time I go to a max security prison and they lock the doors to see a client, I'm always amazed they let me out."



THE LEGEND FROM THE WEST

Those of us from Arizona who were attending the conference benefited greatly from our own "legend." Larry started the Az. Justice Project in 1998 and everyone in the national innocence

community knows and respects him. When any of us said we were from Arizona, they immediately started talking about Larry and how influential he was to their cases and projects.



Larry Hammond



Larry's daughter, Amanda, is one of the fabulous attorneys with the Az Justice Project and was at the conference. When people realized that Larry was her father, they launched into their flattering stories about him. Amanda is very modest and humble, like her dad, and was gracious about the compliments.

So, once more we were all "basking in his reflected glory."



Amanda Stuart Hammond

GREAT CONFERENCE GREAT PEOPLE

"In keeping silent about evil, in burying it so deep within us that no sign of it appears on the surface, we are implanting it, and it will rise up a thousand fold in the future."

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956*

THE END

Lesley Hoyt-Croft April 2014