



Client Exonerated After Spending Nearly 30 Years in Prison

February 28, 2023

Lamar Johnson was wrongfully convicted of murder in St. Louis in 1995 and was exonerated in February 2023. Johnson was convicted of the 1994 murder of Marcus Boyd in St. Louis, Missouri and was sentenced to life in prison. But, as the prosecutor's office who originally convicted Lamar Johnson now admits, Johnson is innocent. In the quarter century since Johnson was wrongfully convicted, substantial evidence of his innocence has come to light showing that his conviction resulted from multiple acts of prosecutorial misconduct and other constitutional violations. Because no credible evidence remains to support his conviction, Johnson's attorneys and the St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Office sought his release.

In 2019, the Circuit Attorney for the City of St. Louis asked that Johnson's conviction be set aside based on evidence discovered by the City's Conviction Integrity Unit that proved Johnson was innocent. Investigators found old files in the Circuit Attorney's office reflecting that the only eyewitness - the only evidence connecting Lamar to the homicide - was paid more than \$4,000 to pick him out of a line up. That eyewitness later wrote a letter to his pastor confessing his wrongful identification of Johnson. Johnson also had a strong alibi defense, being at least 10 minutes from the crime scene. The investigating officer misrepresented the time it would take to drive from where Johnson was to the crime scene.

However, the most significant evidence of Johnson's innocence came from the actual killers, one who confessed before he died in prison and the other who provided credible testimony at Johnson's December, 2022 trial of his involvement in the killing.

Despite all the evidence that Johnson was innocent, prosecutors did not have the power to request a new trial under Missouri law. Accordingly, Missouri legislators quickly passed a new law, which Lathrop GPM attorneys assisted in crafting, that created a pathway for prosecutors to correct wrongful convictions like Johnson's.

Johnson has been a client of the firm since 2019 and Lathrop GPM attorneys Alana McMullin, Matt Jacober and Alex Brown led the work, pro bono, with contributions from several attorneys and staff.

After spending 28 years incarcerated for a crime he did not commit, Johnson finally got his day in court under this new statutory scheme in a 5-day trial in December of 2022. McMullin and Jacober, along with the



rest of Johnson's team, represented Lamar Johnson's during this trial in St. Louis City and were instrumental in responding to objections, consulting with co-counsel (the Midwest Innocence Project and Morgan Pilate) and driving strategy throughout the proceedings. After Johnson's 2022 trial, the court requested extensive post-trial briefing from all parties relating to Johnson's innocence, the constitutional issues that permeated his trial, and the newly enacted statutory framework that applies to Johnson's case. McMullin and Jacober, along with Lindsay Runnels and Kylie Mank, co-counsel from Morgan Pilate LLC, Tricia Bushnell from the Midwest Innocence Project and Jonathan Potts and Charles Weiss, attorneys from Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP representing the St. Louis Circuit Attorneys' Office, presented Johnson's case and were present for the long-awaited ruling on Johnson's freedom.

Johnson, after 28 years, walked out of the City of St. Louis Circuit Court building a free man. He is now applying the same diligence to putting his life back together and figuring out life in 2023 as he did in proving he was innocent.