

Florida Innocence Organizations Mourn the Loss of Former Client and Exoneree Dustin Duty

The Innocence Project of Florida and the Miami Law Innocence Clinic are deeply saddened by the passing of our client, **Dustin Duty**, who died following a medical emergency. He was 42 years old.

Dustin was wrongfully convicted of a 2013 armed robbery in Duval County based on a mistaken eyewitness identification, false testimony, official misconduct, and a profoundly inadequate legal defense. Although he maintained his innocence from the very beginning, he spent more than **eight years behind bars** before the First District Court of Appeal overturned his conviction in 2021. Later that year, the State dismissed all charges, and Dustin finally walked free on October 27, 2021.

While his freedom was restored, the years taken from him could never be returned.

Wrongful conviction is often measured in years lost to incarceration, but its true impact extends far beyond prison walls. It leaves lasting wounds that affect every aspect of a person's life, physical health, mental well-being, financial stability, relationships, and the ability to rebuild after unimaginable loss. For many exonerees, the challenges do not end upon release. In many ways, they are only beginning.

Like so many people who survive wrongful incarceration, Dustin faced tremendous obstacles as he worked to rebuild his life after returning home. The trauma of losing years to a crime he did not commit remained with him long after his release.

Dustin's case serves as a powerful reminder of why this work matters. His conviction rested on failures at nearly every stage of the criminal legal process, from an unduly suggestive eyewitness identification and investigative failures to ineffective legal representation that left critical evidence unheard. It took years of relentless advocacy, litigation, and partnership to correct that injustice, but no court ruling could restore the years he was forced to live without his freedom.

At the Innocence Project of Florida and the Miami Law Innocence Clinic, we celebrate the day someone walks out of prison. But freedom is not the end of the story. Freed people return home carrying immense burdens that most of us cannot imagine. Healing requires more than release; it requires support, community, stability, access to healthcare, employment, housing, and the opportunity to rebuild a life that was unjustly interrupted.

Dustin's passing is a heartbreaking reminder that the consequences of wrongful conviction can last a lifetime.

"We are heartbroken by Dustin's passing," said Seth Miller, Executive Director of the Innocence Project of Florida. "He endured an injustice that no person should ever experience. While we were honored to help secure his freedom, we also know that freedom alone cannot erase years of trauma and loss. We extend our deepest condolences to everyone who loved him and recommit ourselves to ensuring that every person wrongfully convicted has not only the chance to come home, but the support they need to truly live."

“Less than a week after arriving in Florida, Dustin was ensnared in a system that would unjustly take eight years of his life,” said Craig Trocino, Director of the Miami Law Innocence Clinic. “He fought for the truth of his innocence for eight years, and he lived free for less than five. That gap between what our justice system promises and what it actually delivers is the reason this work has to continue. All of us at the University of Miami and the Miami Law Innocence Clinic are devastated by his passing.”

We are profoundly grateful that Dustin entrusted us with his fight for justice. His courage, perseverance, and determination in the face of extraordinary hardship will not be forgotten.

As we mourn his loss, we also reaffirm our commitment to every person still waiting to be heard, every family still searching for justice, and every exoneree working to rebuild after wrongful conviction.

We will remember Dustin not only for what was taken from him, but for why his story matters. May we continue this work with his memory in our hearts, honoring his life by fighting for a future where no innocent person loses years to a wrongful conviction, and where those who return home receive the support they deserve to heal, rebuild, and thrive.

Our thoughts are with Dustin's family, friends, and all those whose lives he touched.

Rest in peace, Dustin. You will not be forgotten.