



INNOCENCE PROJECT OF FLORIDA, INC.
Unlock the Truth

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**Edward Taylor Conviction Vacated
After 33 Years Wrongfully Incarcerated**

Relief Granted After Determination by Conviction Integrity Review Investigation that Key Evidence was Not Disclosed Before Trial.

Jacksonville, FL (May 20, 2022) – Today, after 36 years since his wrongful conviction, Edward Taylor’s wrongful sexual battery conviction was overturned due the State failing to disclose key evidence that would have undermined the victim’s identification—the only evidence against Taylor at his trial. This withheld evidence, in addition to additional evidence pointing to Taylor’s actual innocence, was uncovered by a Conviction Integrity Review (CIR) investigation by Fourth Judicial Circuit State Attorney Melissa Nelson’s Office. The State’s investigation, led by CIR Director Shelley Thibodeau, led the State to agree to a defense motion to vacate the conviction based on this constitutional violation.

A motion for postconviction relief filed by attorneys for Mr. Taylor, Brandon Scheck and Seth Miller of the [Innocence Project of Florida](http://www.innocenceproject.org) (IPF), moved to vacate his judgment and sentence. Fourth Judicial Circuit Judge London Kite overturned the sexual battery conviction for Taylor in a short hearing on May 20, 2022, and the State Attorney’s office dropped all charges shortly thereafter. After 33 years of wrongful incarceration, Mr. Taylor was released from prison on parole in June 2019 during the pendency of the CIR’s investigation. He was discharged from parole supervision in August 2021, but remained on the sex offender registry before his wrongful conviction was overturned today.

Mr. Taylor said, “I have been waiting for this result for such a long time. I am so grateful to the State Attorney’s Office and the Innocence Project of Florida for their diligent reviews of my case. It is such a blessing that I can finally put this ordeal behind me and move on with my life.”

The CIR investigation originated when lawyers from the Innocence Project of Florida and multiple individuals from other state agencies notified the CIR about Taylor’s claims of innocence. The CIR initiated a reexamination of the case and began a comprehensive review of Mr. Taylor’s claim of wrongful conviction.

Mr. Taylor was convicted and sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole in 1986 for the sexual battery of a child, who was his neighbor and a play-mate of his son Jermaine. The victim child did not know the given name of the perpetrator and was never asked to provide a physical description of the perpetrator, but ultimately identified the perpetrator as “Jermaine’s daddy.”

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Based on this, Mr. Taylor was placed in a photo lineup and the victim identified him as her rapist. The case rested solely on this identification.

Unbeknownst to Mr. Taylor or his counsel at the time of trial, reports in the possession of the State indicated that the child had stated on two separate occasions, just days before Mr. Taylor was arrested, that Jermaine had multiple daddies. On one occasion she stated that Jermaine had “three daddies” and on another that he had “two daddies.” Mr. Taylor is in fact the biological father of Jermaine, but he also lived with his two brothers who resembled him in age and appearance. The State has now conceded that this vital evidence was not disclosed to the defense before trial and that “this evidence [was] exculpatory, material, and there is a reasonable probability that this non-disclosed evidence would have resulted in the acquittal of the defendant.”

The State’s conviction integrity investigation also revealed additional evidence that points to Mr. Taylor’s brother Ithemas as the perpetrator. The victim contracted gonorrhea from the perpetrator and multiple contemporaneous medical tests before and after the crime indicated that Mr. Taylor did not have gonorrhea. CIR interviews indicated that Ithemas was treated for gonorrhea near the time of the crime. Additionally, the CIR interviewed additional individuals who were raped by Ithemas under similar circumstances as those in this case.

Most notably, the child victim—now an adult—told IPF and the CIR that she has long-held doubts that she correctly identified Mr. Taylor and believes that Ithemas was her rapist. The CIR obtained expert opinion indicating that both the interviewing techniques and identification procedures used for this victim did not comport with best practices and many factors suggested that the victim’s identification of Mr. Taylor was unreliable. The victim supported Mr. Taylor’s release on parole and the vacating of his conviction.

IPF Executive Director Seth Miller said, “This was a true collaboration between my team at IPF and the CIR that required thorough and diligent work by all. We are grateful to the CIR and the senior leadership at the State Attorney’s office for identifying critical exculpatory evidence and how not having it at trial violated Mr. Taylor’s due process rights.”

IPF Staff Attorney Brandon Scheck said, “We are so pleased that Edward can truly begin his new life completely free of this wrongful conviction. We look forward to more collaborative opportunities with this and other conviction integrity units to achieve justice for the wrongfully convicted.”

The Innocence Project of Florida (IPF) represented Mr. Taylor during this effort. Since 2003, IPF has assisted in the release from wrongful incarceration of 28 innocent individuals who have collectively served more than 580 years for the crimes of others. Located in Tallahassee, IPF’s mission is to find and free the innocent in Florida prisons, help these individuals transition back into a changed society, and work to reform the criminal justice system. For more information, visit www.FloridaInnocence.org.

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