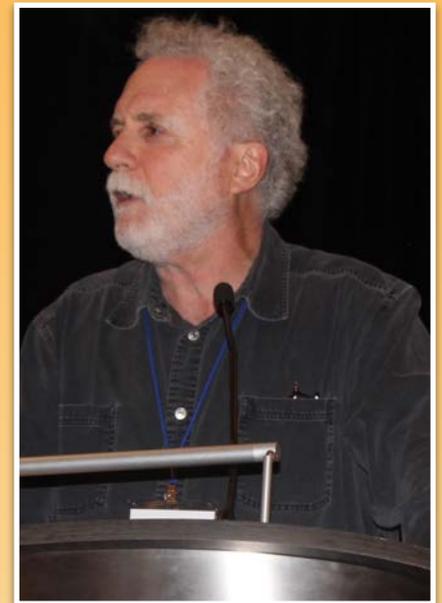


# INNOCENCE CONFERENCE 2017

## San Diego, California



Every year people from all over the United States and indeed, the world, come together to celebrate the lives of those people who have been released after years of wrongful imprisonment. They come to learn about legislative, scientific, social and legal issues related to wrongful arrests and convictions and to share information about ways in which their Projects function to address the complex issues involved in this valuable endeavor.



1992 Founders of the National Innocence Network:  
Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck

# The Arizona Justice Project was well-represented at the Innocence Conference



AJP Executive Director Lindsay Herf



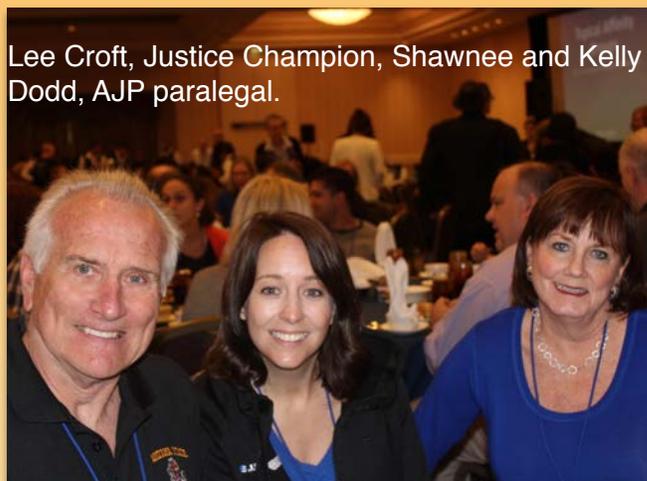
Luke Bennett, Student Board Member and Kindra Fleming, Staff Attorney.



Our wonderful exoneree, Khalil Rushdan, and his wife Arene.



Lindsay's imaginary friend, Alyssa, Lindsay, Dave and Shawnee Ziegler, AJP Operations Manager



Lee Croft, Justice Champion, Shawnee and Kelly Dodd, AJP paralegal.



Lindsay and Lesley Hoyt-Croft, AJP Documentarian.

Vanessa Buch and Dave Euchner, both from Tucson, also attended the conferece.

# Important Issues Addressed at the Conference

## Compensation

Deprived for years of family and friends and the ability to establish oneself professionally, the nightmare does not end upon release. With no money, housing, transportation, health services or insurance, and a criminal record that is rarely cleared despite innocence, the punishment lingers long after innocence has been proven.

Arizona DOES NOT have a compensation statute

The federal government, the District of Columbia, and 32 states have compensation statutes of some form. The following 18 states do not: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Why is Official Acknowledgement of a Wrongful Conviction Important?

“Conceding that no system is perfect, the government’s public recognition of the harm inflicted upon a wrongfully convicted person helps to foster his healing process, while assuring the public that the government – regardless of fault – is willing to take ownership of its wrongs or errors.”



What States Should Do to Compensate the Wrongfully Convicted

- Monetary Compensation, Based Upon a Set Minimum Amount For Each Year Served
- Provision of Immediate Services, Including:
  - Financial support for basic necessities, including subsistence funds, food, transportation;
  - Help securing affordable housing;
  - Provision of medical/dental care, and psychological and/or counseling services;
  - Assistance with education and the development of workforce skills; and
  - Legal services to obtain public benefits, expunge criminal records, and regain custody of children.

# Conviction Integrity Units

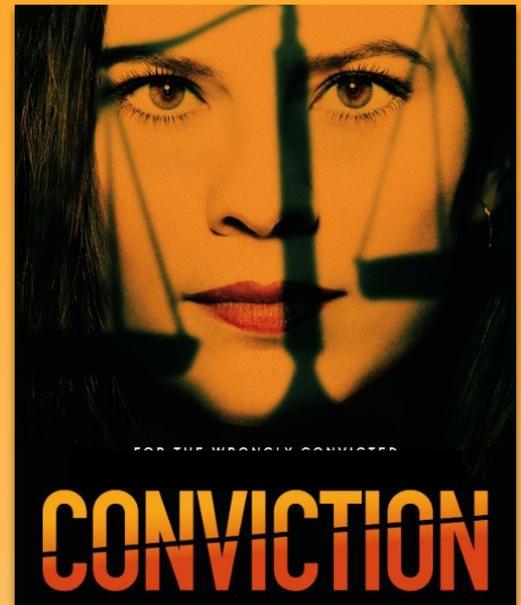
A Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) is a division of a prosecutorial office that is supposed to work to prevent, identify and correct false convictions.

The very first CIU was established [in 2002](#) in Santa Clara County, California, and now, more than a decade later, there are 24 such units in the U.S. That's not a huge number considering the [more than 2,300 prosecutor offices](#) across the nation, but it's growing fast — CIUs have doubled over the past two years and quadrupled since 2011.

The increased presence of CIUs coincides with recent record-high numbers of exonerations. In 2015, almost 150 people were cleared for crimes they never committed, more than any other year in history, according to the National Registry's report. CIUs were responsible for 58 of those cases last year, a record.

But the performance of these units varies widely. Half of the nation's CIUs have not produced any exonerations since their inception. And just three units are responsible for about 90 percent of all CIU exonerations in 2015 — half of which came from a single CIU in Harris County, Texas.

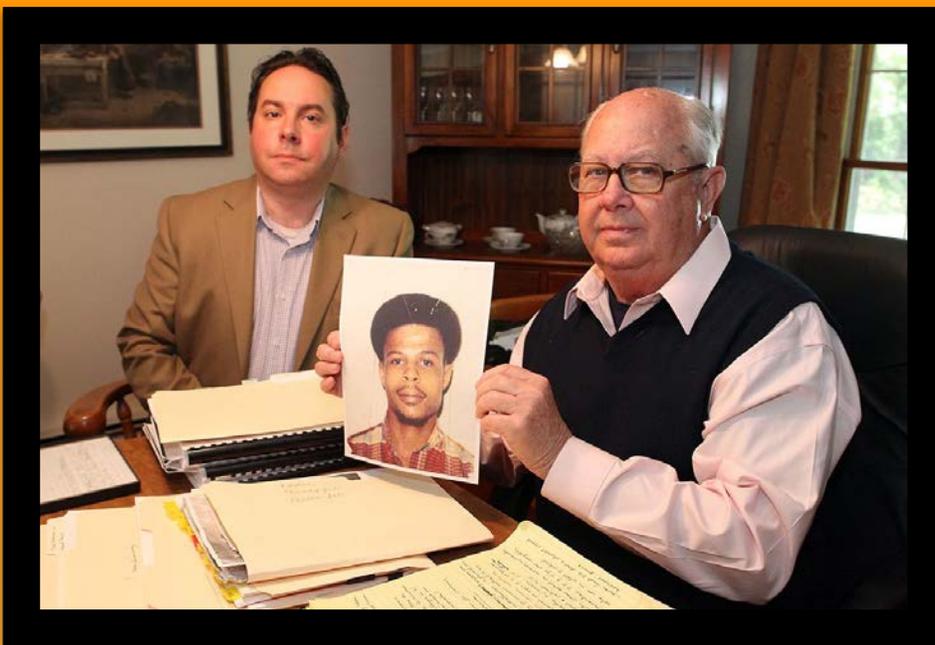
In **Arizona**, the Pima Country CIU has been very cooperative with the AJP and has assisted in the release or pending release of inmates.



Philadelphia's Conviction Review Unit, which investigates claims of innocence of people who feel they have been wrongly convicted, has not produced any exonerations since its establishment in 2014

Some innocence advocates criticize the office for assigning the unit just one staff member - former homicide prosecutor Mark Gilson - who works alongside members of the Post Conviction Relief Act appeals unit, which often fights to uphold convictions rather than reinvestigate them.

"I haven't seen any evidence that [the Conviction Review Unit] is doing meaningful investigations," said Peter Neufeld, co-director of the Innocence Project New York.



Centurion Ministries' Alan Maimon (left) and Jim McCloskey with a photo of Larry Walker. They presented their findings to the District Attorney's Office, but authorities were not swayed.

Source: [http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20161120\\_To\\_Philly\\_s\\_Conviction\\_Review\\_Unit\\_no\\_one\\_is\\_innocent.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20161120_To_Philly_s_Conviction_Review_Unit_no_one_is_innocent.html)

Many [critics of CIUs](#) say that there is an inherent conflict of interest at play, as units are established within prosecutors' offices to critically reassess possible misconduct by prosecutors in the very same offices.

The close relationship these CIUs have with county prosecutors has led some to accuse several of these units of being little more than "public relations ploys," especially when the unit has no external oversight nor any relationships with other key stakeholders like local defense attorneys or groups focused on correcting wrongful convictions, [Gross notes in his report](#).

Daniel Medwed, a law professor at Northeastern University who has written about prosecutorial misconduct in depth, told HuffPost that many CIUs function, to some extent, on a "trust us" mentality, which he says is problematic.

"Trust us to look into these cases, trust us to bring them to the attention of the courts. The problem, of course, is that the trust isn't there — and for good reason," Medwed said. Prosecutors aren't used to being second-guessed. They are the most powerful government agents in the American criminal justice system. They have complete and unrivaled access to evidence that can determine a person's guilt or innocence. And they are largely shielded from any liability for their actions, thanks to a Supreme Court ruling granting them ["absolute immunity."](#) When a prosecutor is behaving ethically, as the vast majority do, that power benefits both the state and the defendant. But even one bad actor in a prosecutor's office can have a significant impact on countless defendants and cases.

Source: Huffington Post 2/24/16  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/conviction-integrity-units-overturn-case\\_us\\_56cd4a4ae4b0ec6725e472ba](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/conviction-integrity-units-overturn-case_us_56cd4a4ae4b0ec6725e472ba)

# BLOG POST # 1

## INNOCENCE CONFERENCE 2017

Blog by Lesley Hoyt-Croft, AJP Documentarian



**San Diego, California**