
The Philadelphia Inquirer

EDITORIALS

Founded in 1829

Railroaded

After he spent 45 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, it would be understandable if Louis Mickens-Thomas were angry, bitter, or outraged. Instead, he was humbled by the turn of events as he ate a dream meal of four fried eggs and home fries.

“What can I say? I’m very fortunate,” he said.

Really? Mickens-Thomas was convicted of murder in 1964 largely through faulty testimony by a crime lab worker who was later proven to be a liar and a fraud.

Insult was added to injury after Gov. Robert P. Casey commuted his conviction in 1995, and the Pennsylvania Parole Board fought his release. Mickens-Thomas spent another *nine* years behind bars before a federal appeals court ordered his release.

Fifteen months later, he was sent back to prison for a parole violation. He was supposed to spend nine months behind bars, but after serving the time was de-

The Pennsylvania parole board needs to examine its procedures after an innocent man spent 45 years in jail.

nied parole in part for his refusal to admit guilt.

Centurion Ministries spent 20 years trying to free him.

In its recent ruling, a three-judge appellate panel cited the parole board for a “combination of willful noncompliance, bad faith, and a sufficient interference of retaliation or vindictiveness.”

Someone needs to examine the parole board. The case underscores how easily, and all too often, people are wrongly convicted. And most aren’t released. At age 82, who does Mickens-Thomas see about getting most of his adult life back?