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## METRO

# DNA Results Free Man on Bond in 1990 Rape Case

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Former Stateville Corrections Center inmate Richard R. Johnson met a young nephew for the first time Tuesday.

He patted the child on the head, hugged two nieces, then took a seven-story elevator ride down the Criminal Courts building and out the door to freedom for the first time in more than four years.

"I feel great, real great. . . . I shouldn't have been in [there in] the first place," Johnson said.

Judge James M. Schreier released Johnson on a \$10,000 bond, deferring until at least Dec. 22 whether to set aside his 1992 conviction for rape. Schreier also ordered him to inform prosecutors daily of his whereabouts and not to leave the county.

The judge said he reviewed recent DNA test results that showed the genetic makeup of the semen retrieved five years ago from a rape victim did not match Johnson's DNA.

"It certainly convinces me he should be out on bond and not incarcerated," said Schreier, who had sentenced Johnson to 36 years in prison.

As he waited to leave the courthouse, Johnson struggled for words.

Asked if being behind bars was akin to torture, Johnson said, "Beyond that. It's like someone had stolen the candy bar and you're paying for it. It's hard."

The shy, thin 31-year-old with short dreadlocks was mobbed by TV cameras and reporters as he left the courthouse at 26th and California. He was whisked away by car to a sister's Chicago home.

Johnson was convicted in a bench trial before Schreier in 1992 for the 1990 rape and robbery of a University of Chicago graduate student in Hyde Park.

The victim identified Johnson from police photos, which were then used on the TV show "America's Most Wanted." After Johnson's arrest in Florida on Aug. 8, 1991, the victim identified him again in a lineup. Johnson had been in custody since then.

DNA tests were never performed on semen taken from the victim before the trial, said Public Defender Thomas G. Cosgrove. Johnson convinced Centurion

Ministries, a New Jersey group, of his innocence, and it paid for the tests. The group helps inmates who it says have been wrongly convicted.

Test results came back Thursday, showing the samples and Johnson's DNA did not match.

Assistant State's Attorney Scott Nelson told Schreier his office needed time to examine the findings before determining if more tests were needed.

Schreier deferred Cosgrove's motion that the conviction be tossed out, ordering both sides back to court Dec. 22 to see what prosecutors wanted to do next.



Richard Johnson  
Convicted in 1992