

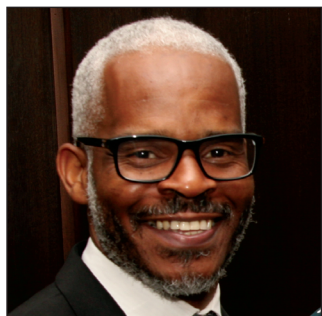
CENTURION

seeking freedom for the innocent in prison

fall 2021

issue nineteen

Exoneree Impact - Influencing Systemic Change



Every time Centurion frees an innocent man or woman from prison, we save a life. That act, in and of itself, is truly extraordinary. At the moment a person walks out of prison, it is impossible to know what ripple effects their new life will ultimately have on society. Recently, two Centurion exonerees had legislation named after them that will have a profound impact on the innocent people we serve. One will help to protect those who are wrongfully accused, and the other will ensure that those who have suffered unimaginable injustice will be compensated. We are so proud of Richard Miles (left) and Walter Lomax, and grateful for their tireless advocacy.

Richard Miles Act

In October this year, the Dallas District Attorney created the Richard Miles Act, a law that, if in existence in 1995, should

(continued on page 4)



Hope Is a Letter

Thoughts from a
volunteer,
by Jock McFarlane,
(pg 5).



The Gift of Comfort

Gifts that bring
heartwarming comfort,
by Corey Waldron,
(pg 6).

Welcome Christina

Centurion welcomes our
newest member,
Christina François,
(pg 7).

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Freedom for the innocent



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Centurion

A letter from Executive Director Corey Waldron



Dear Friends,

*I sometimes struggle to synthesize my thoughts when I sit down to write my notes for our newsletters; I find myself overwhelmed by the scope and gravity of Centurion's work, and I want to make sure I accurately capture our good news and our challenges during a given moment in time. However, this year, my work here is easy - the facts speak for themselves. **In 2021, Centurion freed three innocent men from prison; collectively, they served nearly 100 years incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. They will be spending the holidays at home with family and friends for the first time in decades.** I want to thank you for helping us bring them home. Thank you for believing in our team, and for caring about the innocent men and women we serve.*

*Going into 2022, Centurion has tremendous momentum and a seemingly renewed sense of energy and purpose. We continue to work on behalf of our 22 current clients, and recently committed to representing three new innocent individuals. **Thanks to the addition of our recently hired Assistant Legal Director, Christina Francois (learn more about her on page 7), we hope to take on a growing number of cases in the future.** The men and women we have freed over the past 40 years are benefitting from comprehensive support coordination from our on-staff Social Worker, Pam Feig, and are thriving. Together, we are helping the people we serve rebuild.*

The lives you help us save are precious, not only to us and to the people who love them, but to their communities and to our mission of seeking justice for the wrongfully incarcerated. Our cover story highlights the important work some of our exonerees are doing and the systemic change they are influencing.

Please continue to support our work. We are incredibly grateful and proud of all that you have helped us accomplish this year. With your renewed support, we will continue bringing hope and justice to innocent men and women across the country.

Be well and Happy Holidays,

Corey Waldron
Executive Director

A handwritten signature of Corey Waldron in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Donate online at:
centurion.org/donatenow

WE NEED YOU

On average, it takes 8-10 years and \$350K to free an innocent person from prison.

Your gift enables us to free innocent men and women and provide them with the essential tools to rebuild their new life.

Visit us at centurion.org/ways-to-give to see all the ways you can make a contribution today or go to centurion.org/donatenow to make a donation by credit card or PayPal.

Exoneree Impact - Influencing Systemic Change

(continued from page 1)

have prevented Richard's 15-year wrongful conviction. In Richard's case, either the trial prosecutor withheld or, as he claims now, the police withheld evidence that the eyewitness did not identify Richard as the assailant when initially interviewed. At trial he did identify Richard, but when we discovered the original interview through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and then spoke with the eye witness, he said, and later testified at an evidentiary hearing, that Richard was not the person he saw. This new law requires Dallas County police agencies to verify that they have turned over all evidence when filing a case with prosecutors, including any evidence discovered after the initial surrender. Ironically, Texas has the Michael Morton Act that basically says the same thing, with one small difference: the complying Dallas police must sign a statement declaring all the evidence has been turned over; Morton does not. We must hope the prosecutors will then turn over records to the defense attorneys, which is the most significant void in the entire criminal justice system. Brady v. Maryland, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that prosecutors have been winking at since its inception

in 1963, states the prosecutor must turn over all evidence that might exonerate the defendant. Prosecutors have serially argued about what exactly is exculpatory evidence, resulting in concealing much that would be helpful to the defense.

Walter Lomax Act

Fifty-four years after his wrongful conviction, Walter Lomax will finally receive compensation from the state of Maryland. In April of this year, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan signed into law the Walter Lomax Act that will compensate those who have been wrongly convicted in Maryland. Walter spent 39 years as an innocent man in prison before being freed and it would be another eight years before he was exonerated. Upon being released from prison in 2006, Walter founded the Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative where he worked tirelessly to change the draconian Life Without Parole (LWOP) system by promoting humane and sensible sentencing policies, while collaterally endeavoring to set up a functioning compensation process for exonerees. Walter is still working to change the LWOP laws.

Hope Is a Letter

by Jock McFarlane

I didn't realize until there was a Centurion celebration in 2019 for recently released exonerees how much hope can be in a letter.

Hope in letters I wrote 18 years ago to men I didn't know and had never met. Men who had been in prison for more than a decade and had no hope of leaving before they died.

I wrote the first letters in 2003 when I was recently retired and a new volunteer at Centurion. Volunteers help answer the over twelve hundred letters received each year from men and women in prison who turn to Centurion for help.

After six years of corresponding with Lamonte McIntyre and Dominic Lucci (Dominic's case included Mark Jones and Ken Gardiner), obtaining police reports, reading trial transcripts, and examining related information, I wrote a report about each case. In 2009, Jim McCloskey committed Centurion to work for their release. At the time of the promise to each client that their case has been accepted, their name is placed with removable letters on a signboard in the Centurion office. The name stays

there until the person is free to come and remove it.

The subsequent story of Centurion's thorough investigation and frustrating court appeals of these cases is detailed on Centurion.org. A planned six-day hearing for a new trial in Lamonte's case ended after a day and a half when the District Attorney said all charges would be vacated and Lamonte walked out of prison that afternoon. Dominic, Mark, and Ken's case culminated in a 9-0 Georgia Supreme Court decision in their favor. All four men were home for Christmas, 2017. They had collectively served nearly a century in prison.

It was a very emotional time for each of us at that Centurion celebration a year and a half later when I met Lamonte, Dominic, Mark, and Ken for the first time. It was hugs and tears for everyone. The next day each of them took his name off the board.

Dominic told my daughter that he had pretty much lost all hope until he received the first letter from Centurion. In our work, hope does come in a letter.

Finally Free:

Stories of Wrongful Incarceration and the Long Journey Home!



Ben Spencer 34 yrs



Larry Walker 38 yrs



Richard Miles 15 yrs



Shawn Henning 30 yrs



Ricky Birch 30 yrs

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our virtual event on Nov. 30!

If you missed our live event or would like to see it again, visit us at centurion.org/2021-fall-virtual-event to watch the recording.

The Gift of Comfort by Corey Waldron

It's an obvious statement, but prison cells are, by design, cold, sparse, dehumanizing cages that offer no comfort to those forced to inhabit them. During the decades they spend serving time in prison for crimes they did not commit, the people we serve have very little (if anything) they can call their own. When they are released, they finally have the opportunity to create a home where they can build their new lives and hopefully find some peace.

Centurion is lucky to have a dedicated group of artists who make sure that every time one of our clients is released from prison, they receive a gift made with love

and care to welcome them home. While we take the people we support shopping to get the essentials they need to establish their new living spaces, there's nothing like a handmade gift to let someone know that they are truly loved.

For hundreds of years quilts have served not only the practical purpose of providing warmth, but perhaps more importantly, conveying love and comfort from the makers to the recipients. Since 2017, Centurion's newly released clients have received a quilt from the Garden State Quilters Guild. These quilts are the result of a collaboration between Centurion volunteer Sue Schmerler and Sunshine,

*Sue Schmerler &
Centurion exoneree
Ralph Lee.*

*Centurion exonerees,
Kenneth Gardiner (below),
Larry Walker (right).*

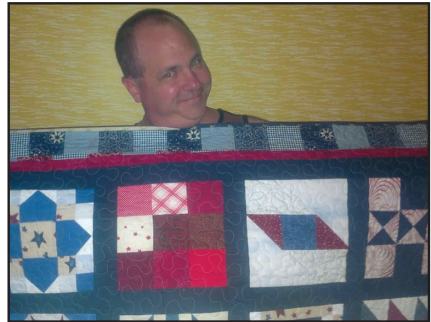
*Opposite page: Centurion
exonerees, Mark Jones
with his family (left), and
Dominic Lucci (right).*



the charity arm of the Guild. To date, more than a dozen quilts have been sent out.

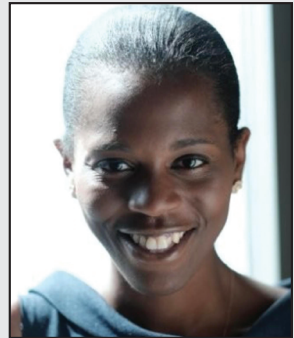
On Sunday, November 14, Larry Walker received the quilt that Sue and her fellow artisans made just for him. Upon receiving

it, he admired its vibrant colors and noted that he looks forward to using it to keep warm in the coming months. Larry, we hope your new quilt brings you the comfort and security you deserve. Welcome home.



Welcome Christina

Centurion is thrilled to announce the addition of an exceptional new team member. On November 1, Christina François joined the Centurion team as our Assistant Legal Director. In this newly created role, Christina will be working closely with our Legal Director, Paul Casteleiro, our Investigators, and our Case Development team to ensure that our clients receive the expert representation they deserve as they fight for their rightful freedom.



A resident of Jersey City, NJ, Christina got her undergraduate degree at Rutgers and her law degree from Washington University School of Law. Most recently, Christina worked at the Legal Aid Society in the Parole Revocation Defense unit (during which she spent a significant amount of time on Rikers Island working with clients with special needs), and then in the Criminal Defense Practice.

When asked about her experience over the first month of working with us, Christina said "It is a huge honor and pleasure to join this team. Centurion's most recent case round was in October 2021 and the team has since decided to take on a handful of new cases. The past few weeks have consisted of reading through our clients' files, visiting one client in person, and learning from my teammates. I am thrilled to be here."

In adding an Assistant Legal Director to our team, we anticipate being able to take on more cases in the future. We are confident that she will be a tremendous asset to Centurion and the people we serve!

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