

For Immediate Release
Sept. 27, 2018

LOYOLA PROJECT FOR THE INNOCENT SECURES PART OF \$830K GRANT FROM JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TO FUND POST-CONVICTION DNA TESTING

LOS ANGELES – The Loyola Project for the Innocent (LPI) at Loyola Law School, Los Angeles has been awarded a nearly \$430,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice - National Institute of Justice (NIJ) that will allow the investigation of a greater number of innocence cases in which there is a need for post-conviction DNA testing.

The award, which begins in January 2019, also will allow the LPI to fund two additional attorney positions over the next two years to investigate claims of wrongful conviction. Since 2011, LPI has secured the release of seven clients who collectively served more than 133 years in prison for crimes they did not commit.

The NIJ grant funds a joint effort between Loyola's Project for the Innocent and the Criminalistics Program within the School of Criminal Justice and Criminalistics at California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) – a program committed to the advancement of the forensic sciences through a multidisciplinary approach focusing on research development, professional training, student support and community engagement.

"We could not be more thrilled about this one-of-a-kind collaboration," said Paula Mitchell, LPI legal director. "This collaborative grant will allow the LPI to seek and achieve justice for our ever-expanding base of clients and provide an even richer experience to our students."

The total funds awarded under the grant to both the LPI and CSULA is \$830,884 from a total of \$5.4 million awarded to LPI and eight other organizations nationwide dedicated to post-conviction testing of DNA.

The grant will allow the LPI to collaborate with CSULA to investigate more felony cases in which individuals are claiming that DNA testing will establish their innocence. The need is particularly dire in Los Angeles County, which has accounted for just six of 23 exonerations in California, and which incarcerates more people than any other state except Texas.

LPI's attorneys will liaise with CSULA Forensic Science faculty and graduate students associated with the Criminalistics Program to identify and review appropriate DNA cases, locate biological evidence associated with those cases and conduct testing on available evidence.

The LPI has now received two grants from the DOJ in as many years. In 2017, the LPI was named the recipient of a competitive \$223,500 grant by the DOJ to hire additional staff to investigate and litigate on behalf of wrongfully convicted defendants.

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About Loyola's Project for the Innocent

The Loyola Project for the Innocent (LPI) pursues claims of actual innocence on behalf of those wrongfully convicted of crimes. Students work under the supervision of founder Laurie Levenson, David W. Burcham Professor of Ethical Advocacy; Legal Director Paula Mitchell; Program Director Adam Grant; and other supervising attorneys. Since 2011, LPI has secured the release of seven clients who collectively served more than 133 years in prison for crimes they did not commit. They include Maria Mendez (2018 release after 11 years in prison); Jaime Ponce (2017 release after 19 years in prison); Marco Contreras (2017 release after 20 years in prison); Andrew Leander Wilson (2017 release after 32 years in prison), Kash Delano Register (2013 release after 34 years in prison) and Obie Anthony (2011 release after 17 years in prison). Learn more at www.lls.edu/ProjectfortheInnocent.

About Loyola Law School, Los Angeles

Located on an award-winning Frank Gehry-designed campus in downtown Los Angeles, Loyola Law School is home to prominent faculty, dedicated students and cutting-edge programs. The Law School strives to instill in students the knowledge they need to excel on their chosen paths. It dedicates itself to preparing students for the rigors of practice with an extensive portfolio of practical-training opportunities, an 18,000-strong alumni network and a focus on social justice. Learn more at www.lls.edu.

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