



PENNSYLVANIA  
INNOCENCE  
PROJECT

Spotlight on  
**RETURNING HOME**

ANNUAL  
REPORT **2021**



Andrew Swainson (right) & John Miller (left, depicted with John's nephew) share a bit about their lives after exoneration

# Looking Back at 2021

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# From Our Board President

Dear Friends,

Laying a solid foundation is critical for building for a solid future. 2021 was an important and exciting year for the Pennsylvania Innocence Project, as we undertook an intensive effort to lay the foundation for our future by developing an ambitious five-year Strategic Plan and ensuring that we are well positioned to put that plan into action.

The Project Board and staff worked together throughout 2021 to develop a Strategic Plan that reflects our mission – to exonerate those convicted of crimes they did not commit, to prevent innocent people from being prosecuted and convicted, and to help those wrongfully convicted transition to freedom.

Demand for our services is high, as demonstrated by the enormous number of letters we receive each year from persons incarcerated in Pennsylvania's jails and prisons. The Project has nearly 1,400 cases in one of four stages of review and dozens in active litigation, and the flow of requests from individuals seeking our help is constant. We cannot and will not be satisfied if we are not growing the Pennsylvania Innocence Project in order to meet this extraordinary demand.

Our Strategic Plan calls for us to work to release more wrongfully convicted persons and achieve their exoneration, and to enhance our reentry support for those persons. In order to succeed, we must grow our staff, we must invest in technology, and we must bolster our capacity for education and for advocacy.

In 2021, with your generous support, the Pennsylvania Innocence Project laid the groundwork for the growth and success called for by our Strategic Plan. Our two major virtual events, both highly successful because of the contributions of every supporter and sponsor, helped us to end the year in our strongest-ever financial position. And the dedicated work of our

legal team put us in a position where we are optimistic that we will soon be linking arms with additional clients as we walk them out of prisons where they have been held improperly for years. Every single gift helped us get to this position – your arms are linked with ours, and we truly appreciate that.

The Pennsylvania Innocence Project has come to this exciting point because of your support. We thank you deeply and genuinely. Together, we have made and will continue to make real differences in the lives of the wrongfully convicted.

My best regards,



Samuel W. Silver  
President, Board of Directors

## Our 2021 Financial Overview

**Total Revenue: \$1,459,000**

**Charitable Contributions:** \$1,403,000

**Investment Income:** \$35,000

**Workshop Fees:** \$21,000

**Total Expenses: \$1,118,000**

**Program Services:** \$815,000

**Fundraising:** \$193,000

**Administrative Expenses:** \$110,000

Our pro bono partners are vital to the Project and to our clients. In 2021, we received more than **6,000 pro bono hours** from volunteer attorneys totaling over **\$3 million** worth of contributed legal services.

# Supporting Exonerees

## After Reentry

The impact of wrongful conviction persists in exonerees' lives after their release. Despite the fact that they are innocent, many exonerees face psychological trauma, barriers to employment, and stigmatization. The additional burden of wrongful conviction often appears in the form of long-term mental health challenges that resemble extreme forms of trauma experienced by military veterans and torture survivors.



The Pennsylvania Innocence Project has a vibrant **reentry program tailored to meet the unique needs of exonerees**. Clients receive individualized support provided by our Reentry Social Worker, Blanca Castro (left). She advocates for and addresses our clients' needs as they transition back into the community. In addition, clients participate in Transition to Innocence, a support group where exonerated clients gather in a space of healing and empowerment. The Project's reentry work serves a critical need – Pennsylvania is one of only 13 states that provides no compensation or services for the wrongfully convicted.

John Miller and Andrew Swainson – two of our more than 30 reentry clients – generously share a bit about their experiences on the next page. We are proud to support the great courage, strength, and resilience that clients demonstrate in the search for justice and healing upon reentry.

## Highlights of Our Reentry Services

The Pennsylvania Innocence Project is proud to offer our clients:



Outreach & individual support



Transition to Innocence support group

With a focus on stability, and personal and family goals, we provide assistance as needed with:



Identification & vital records



Benefits enrollment



Housing searches



Physical & mental health



Education & employment



Transportation

## Spotlight on Returning Home



**Andrew Swainson**

### **What are some of the things you are most proud of having accomplished in the time since you've been exonerated?**

The biggest is me getting married. Getting my citizenship is a highlight. And, finally, I had the opportunity to visit my parents [in Jamaica] and see them in free society after 32 years.

A very important aspect of my life is that I volunteer, at a food pantry, a nursing home, and also as a referee for kids' soccer. And my job, I work in maintenance at one of the most prestigious hospitals in my area. I feel instrumental there.

### **What has been the most challenging for you since you've been out?**

One of the challenges is that I find I'm very hard on myself, for not knowing certain things that somebody my age should have learned, and because of my incarceration I wasn't able to do so. It tends to get me frustrated, and I beat myself up.

**Andrew was exonerated in June 2020, after 31 years in prison.**

There are also times since I've been home where I've dreamed of me being back in the penal system. When I wake up ... I'm afraid to open my eyes, that I'll see a bunk over my head and learn that my freedom was just a dream.

With that being said, *obstacle* is really not a word that I use too often. There is absolutely nothing I can't achieve if I really put my mind to it.



**John Miller**

### **What was the most challenging part of your first year as an exoneree?**

Honestly, just getting to know my family again. When I [was wrongfully convicted], my siblings and me were so young. After 22 years, we're not the same. So I had to get to know them all over again.

**John was exonerated in July 2019, after 22 years in prison.**

And they have their own lives. At the time, when I came home, it was a new world for me – I want to go here, see this – and they've got jobs. So whenever they could, we'd get together, but the majority of the time I figured things out myself.

### **What are some of the things you are most proud of doing in your first year of reentry?**

This is my first time doing things on my own, being responsible, paying bills. I had never done those things before. So, it's exciting. I started a trucking company, based in Atlanta. Right now I own a truck and three trailers.

After I won my civil suit my financial advisor asked me what I wanted to do as far as an investment. I said I wanted to do trucks. He had a friend who went to Howard with him, and he had a fleet of trucks. So he taught me, helped me get set up. And that's the first investment I made.

### **What are your plans for the future?**

I'm planning on moving to Atlanta, once my lease here ends. I am ready for a fresh start.

**2021.** Our second year of working to free innocent people from prison in the midst of a global **pandemic**. Our second year with **little in-person access** to our clients. Our second year of **Zoom court proceedings**.

But, 2021 was so much more than that for the Pennsylvania Innocence Project. **It was a year of persistence and perseverance.** Despite all of the challenges the pandemic has brought to our work and to the world around us, we carried on. We reached a new milestone of having received letters requesting assistance from over 7,000 people since the Project first opened its doors in 2009. Throughout 2021, we continued to review those cases to determine which ones might be appropriate for investigation and representation by the Project. We cannot take every case, but **we are committed to giving every individual a diligent review and the dignity they deserve.** We



were helped in this process by 74 interns, who we were excited to welcome back to in-person classes, as well as the invaluable contributions of pro bono attorneys and other volunteers.

In cases in which we have completed the review process, 2021 was the Pennsylvania Innocence Project's busiest year yet. We had active cases in state and federal courts throughout the Commonwealth – including representing clients in two evidentiary hearings, filing new petitions seeking post-conviction relief, and filing four amicus curiae briefs with the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

**Most notably, prosecutors agreed that two of our clients' convictions should be vacated, and we are now waiting for decisions from the courts.** We look to 2022 well positioned to bring more innocent Pennsylvanians home.

Nilam A. Sanghvi  
*Legal Director*

## Farewell to Nan Feyler

Nan Feyler joined the Pennsylvania Innocence Project as Executive Director in August of 2019 and led us through two and a half very successful years before her retirement in early 2022. **We thank Nan and wish her the very best.**

## In Memory...

**Han Tak Lee** passed away in September 2021 after a battle with cancer. Mr. Lee was exonerated in 2015; he spent 24 years in prison for a crime that did not even occur – a fire mislabeled as an arson.



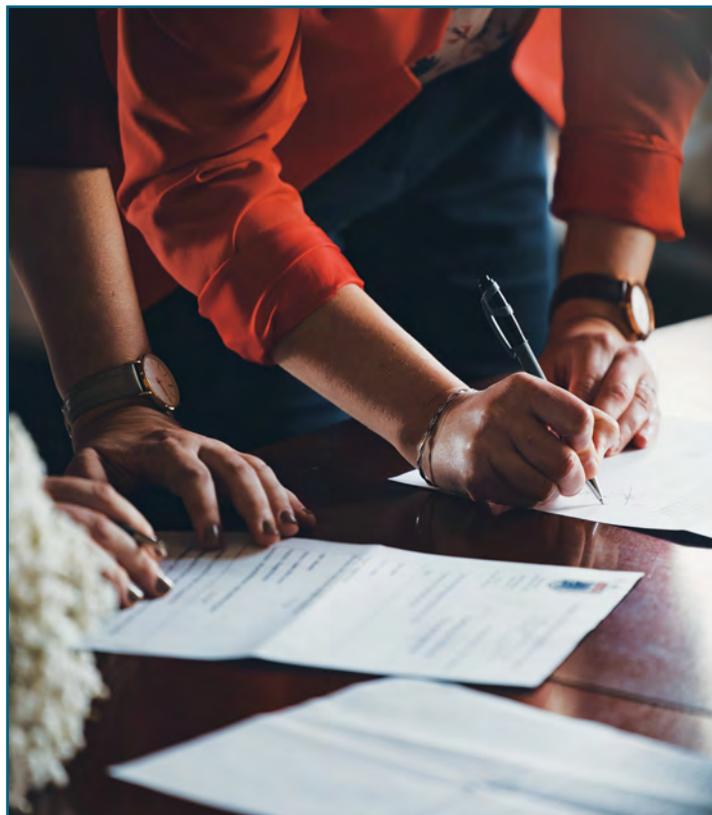
# Educational Institution

## Support

A core part of our mission is to provide clinical training and experience to students in the fields of law, communications, criminal justice, and forensic science. In 2021, we worked with interns and provided law clinics to students all over the Commonwealth and beyond, as shown in the list of schools below.

We'd like to extend a **special thanks to the Temple University Beasley School of Law** for housing and supporting our offices since our founding. **Thanks also to Duquesne University School of Law** for its many years of support and housing our Western Pennsylvania Office.

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We would never be able to do the work that we do, or have the impact that we have, without the **steadfast support and partnership of lawyers across the Commonwealth and beyond**. For their tireless efforts, we are immensely grateful to the following:

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## Virtual Annual Events 2021 (Photos on back cover)

Top row, L to R: Pittsburgh Managing Attorney **Liz DeLosa** presented exoneree **Daniel Carnevale** with a Steelers jersey signed by Juju Smith-Schuster; **Howard Scher**, our Board president emeritus, accepts the Hero of Justice Award.

Middle row, L to R: **Nate Andrisani** of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP, received the Edward D. Ohlbaum Volunteer Award, named after his mentor from Temple Law, for his work freeing Andrew Swainson; former Assistant District Attorney and Conviction Integrity Unit Supervisor **Patricia Cummings** accepts the Maureen Rowley Award.

Bottom row, L to R: Legal Director **Nilam Sanghvi**, Pittsburgh Managing Attorney **Liz DeLosa**, and pro bono attorney **Susan Metcalfe** of Potomac Law Group, discuss exoneree Dan Carnevale's case; **Chester Hollman III**, Board member and exoneree, presents the Maureen Rowley Award to Patricia Cummings.

# Virtual Annual Events 2021:

August 5 & October 20

In 2021, we hosted two virtual events. Our first event in the summer focused on **our pro bono attorneys who step up** to handle cases, particularly those in Western Pennsylvania. Our fall event celebrated some of **our champions through the years** who have spent their careers dedicated to justice. (See photo captions on the previous page.)



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