

Good afternoon, my name is Monica Gray, and it's an honor to be here today. I've prepared a written account of how a wrongful conviction has impacted my life. 20 years ago I was the girlfriend of Ricky Kidd who was wrongfully convicted and sent to prison leaving behind our daughter who was yet to be born. It wasn't just Ricky who received injustice, it was all of us. Today, I would like to share with you our story and the devastation it caused us.

I meet Ricky in **August 1990** when I was 13 we lost touch and reunited summer of 1995, after I graduated from high school.

**Oct. 1995** - I moved from the suburbs of Overland Park to the inner city with Ricky.

**Feb. 14, 1996** – We were basically ambushed by the KCMO police department. I was terrified. I only saw things like this on TV. We were interrogated about a double murder that happen on Feb. 6, 1996 and later released.

**April 1996** – we found out we were 3 months pregnant and we were overjoyed.

**May 22, 1996** - was doomsday. Ricky left home and later that day he called to inform me that he was being charged with the double murder we were interrogated about in Feb. At the age of 19, I didn't know what to do. I left like a trapped rat in maze. It hit me that the love of my life was in jail for a crime he didn't commit. I had distance myself from my family, so I didn't feel comfortable calling them. My mother is a very blunt lady. She called me a couple days later asking if Ricky was arrested for a murder because she heard it on the radio and, I lied and said, ABSOLUTLY NOT, that's another Ricky Kidd. Yea, how long was I going to keep that lie up.

**June 1996** – I finally told my family and move back home with my parents. Growing up, I lived a sheltered and I knew I needed my parents to survive this ordeal. My family and I were very supportive of Ricky. I went to see Ricky every day even though I'm claustrophobic and struggle with anxiety due to being sexually abused at a young age, but the love I had for Ricky made me face that fear every day. We were inseparable.

**Oct. 18, 1996** I gave birth to our daughter and I was only able to talk to Ricky on the phone. Ricky got to hold her for this first and ONLY time when she was 3 weeks old due to the jail pod he was in.

**March 24, 1997**- Ricky was convicted and sentenced to life in prison – I was devastated and beyond distraught yet again. I was like how can this happen. He's innocent. We had a solid alibi. We were at the sheriff's office at the time of the murders. Ricky was applying for a firearm permit. I thought justice was going to be served and he was going to come home and we were going to a family.

**June 1997** – Ricky was transferred to Potosi. I was stressed trying to raise our daughter and I told Ricky I couldn't take care of all of us and we lost contact. My father would send Ricky pictures of our daughter, but I left him. I was told at one point that Ricky didn't want to live and contemplated suicide. We were both going through our own separate hell. I became very bitter about life. I was just trying to survive without the love of my life. This wasn't the life I envisioned for myself. For the next 10 years life

was just a blur...there was very limited contact between Ricky and I. Our daughter and I had some good times and then some not so good times.

Ricky missed so many holidays, birthdays and even our daughters first day of kindergarten. Ricky missed all these special moments. We needed him, but due to the injustice we were given he missed them all. Rick would send our daughter pictures of himself, but I never told her that her father was in prison. Like I said we were both going through our own hell. I constantly had financial problems trying to raise our daughter. My parents were a great help and believe me I know I wouldn't have made it without them, but at times, my pride kept me from constantly asking them for help. For an example in 2000 my daughter's daycare was over \$500.00 a month and I was only making \$11.50 an hour. We needed Ricky then. Time went on and I continued to do my best. I was working and started volunteering at Rose Brooks Domestic Violence Shelter and Ronald McDonald House. Things were looking pretty good.

**In 2003** - I was introduced to a gentleman through a good friend. I thought he was a nice guy and on our first date he raped me. I went to the hospital. A rape kit was performed? It took me a little while to get past it. My anxiety was so terrible that it was hard to eat solid foods. When my anxiety gets the best of me, my gag reflexes are heightened. I ate mashed potatoes for a couple of months. I then started volunteering at MOCSA. I didn't want another woman to go through a rape kit by herself. Our daughter and I both needed Ricky.

Time passed and we lived.

**Professor Sean O'Brien and MIP took rick's case in 2007.** I was still bitter about the injustice and didn't care about his case, but I said I would help.

**End of 2007**- I hit another rough patch. Life was getting the best of me. I just didn't want to live. I was tired of fighting life's battles. I was working, going to school pursuing my degree in Psychology, my daughter was having problems in school, she was ADHD and were battling her type 2 diabetes and to top it off, I was in a miserable relationship. I went into a deep depression. I didn't eat nor bath for a couple of days. I finally went to see a counselor for help and I ended up in the hospital. My daughter was 11 years old. She had to live with my parents for a little while. Sean and I were scheduled to meet, but I was embarrassed for him to see me in the hospital. Sean visited me in the hospital and I will forever be grateful to him for his amazing words of encouragement. This is a time that our daughter needed her dad.

**Ricky and I reconnected in 2008**- I said to myself I got my best friend back and since then our friendship has grown stronger than ever.

**In 2009** – Ricky had a court hearing that took place and I thought justice would prevail but it didn't. Another let down and more injustice and on top of that I trying to get out of an abusive relationship that put me in the ER and nearly cost me my life. I really needed my best friend.

**End of 2009** - Our daughter was 13 years old and was continuously being bullied due to her obesity from being a type two diabetic. One day she stayed after school to get extra help on homework and she

rode the late bus home and the kids were so rude to her calling her elephant that she ran home crying. I went door to door that evening. Our daughter didn't want to live...she was giving up on life at the age of 13. Her pain was killing me. I felt helpless. I said here we go again with the bullying. She endured the same amount of bullying in grade school. We really needed Ricky, but you know what she survived.

**Feb 2011** - I received a call on my 34<sup>th</sup> birthday from a detective from Lenexa police department and he told me that my 14 year old daughter and her two friends were lured by two older men to their home. The men tried to engage in sexual activities with them. Thankfully nothing happen to her. She told me she was so scared and it hurt my heart that my daughter went through that. We needed Ricky.

**April 2011** - My mother went into septic shock and almost died. My family and I were terrified. It was a rough time for all of us. Ricky was only able to console us over the phone, but we needed him in person.

**Fall 2011** – **Our daughter was 14 years old when she met her father Ricky in person for the first time, what a memorable moment.**

More joyous occasions passed without all of us being together as a family.

**March 2012** – My dad underwent his 5<sup>th</sup> surgery for intestinal blockages. Several days later we were told the surgery did more damage than it helped and they basically told us dad was going to die. We were all devastated. Dad had even given up. One day Ricky called him....they has always had close relationship. After dad got off the phone with Rick, he said if Rick can fight this long which at that time Rick had been fighting for his freedom for 16 years, dad said he could fight a little longer. How it is that someone in Rick's situation could help uplift someone else. After speaking with Ricky, dad turned the situation over to GOD and a couple days later dad went home.

**In 2013** when our daughter was a sophomore in high school she started hanging out with the wrong crowd & I didn't know it was the wrong crowd until it was too late and some things happen to her that was so devastating that she didn't want to live. Fina needed her dad. I blamed myself and felt I failed as a parent. Things were happening to my daughter and I wasn't there to protect her. I still blame myself for a lot of her devastation. Again we needed Ricky.

Time went on and she healed. She started to enjoy her teenage year. She's a fighter like her parents.

Ricky missed out on so many special moments that our daughter needed him.

Our daughter's favorite holiday the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Ricky missed every year of them.

The first time our daughter drove a car at the age of 15, Ricky should have been there.

Our daughter's Surprise 16<sup>th</sup> birthday bash at my brother's house, she deserved to have her dad there.

Our daughter's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday at Cheesecake Factory with our entire family. Ricky should have been there.

**Summer of 2014** – Our daughter went on college visits with my dad – Ricky should have been there.

**Dec. 2014** - The road trip to Chicago to celebrate her completing high school a semester early, Ricky should have been there. She deserved to have her dad there.

**March 2015** – Ricky had a court hearing that was productive, but he still didn't come home with us.

**May 2015** - Our daughter's graduating from high school, Ricky was able to listen over the phone, but he should have been there. Our daughter deserved to have both her parents present.

**September 2015** - Finding out my dad had cancer. Thankfully it's only stage one, but it's still cancer & the news was shocking.

**Spring 2016** – Our daughter moving into her first apartment. She was so excited. Ricky should have been there.

Today, I'm proud of the young lady our daughter has become. Things are going well with us. She is my lifeline and I'm hers. We are both happy and at peace. She still struggles at times with her health, but she's a survivor. I work at a wonderful corporation with a great team. I graduate in the spring with my Bachelors of Arts degree in Psychology, so I can counsel young adults on a volunteer basis. It will be a joyous occasion for me. People will never understand the struggle I endured to get this far. I have faith Ricky will be out to partake in my joyous occasion.

Time is of the essence and we've already lost 20 years. We've missed enough special moments as a family and we don't deserve to miss any more. The only thing missing from me and our daughter's life is Ricky. At this moment his health is declining and he needs proper medical attention. Our daughter tells me all the time, Mom I just want dad home. We go visit Ricky often. I will admit it's still rough for being claustrophobic, but it's worth it to see him. It's always so hard for us to leave him. Every time we leave my daughter says I hate leaving dad. Jan. 2017 is Ricky's lawyer's next court hearing with Judge Midkiff and we are hoping for the best.

There are over 2 million individuals in our nation's jails and prisons. My father always says people need show just as much passionate and energy to free the innocent as we do to put the guilty behind bars because the 2% to 5% of prisoners that are innocent ....means that same 2% to 5% of criminals are walking the street.

## Ricky's current case facts

- One of the perpetrators Marcus Merrill who is serving a life sentence for the crime has confessed & said Ricky DID NOT commit the crime and that he committed the crime, along with two of his family members.
- An independent witness who is a friend of Marcus Merrill testified in court that Merrell and the two other perpetrators were over his house the morning of the crime and he gave them two of the weapons used in the murders. He also testified that Ricky's name **was not** mentioned and that Ricky wasn't present.
- In a Federal hearing the state's star witness recanted his statement and said he made a mistake and that Ricky didn't commit the crime.
- Documentation proving that Ricky was at the Lake Jacomo Sheriff's office at the time of the murders.
- We are currently waiting on the final test result of the DNA

**In Closing** – People may ask would everything have had happen if Rick was out, No I don't believe it would have. I believe life would have been great, even though we would have had our ups and downs just like any family, but I don't believe we would have been through that much turmoil. I always say if you change one event in a person's life it causes a domino effect. Ricky going to jail caused a domino effect of bad events. Rick could be out in our community making a difference. He is making a difference in prison, by assisting others with their cases who are truly wrongfully incarcerated. He has authored several books, produced plays and facilitated many outreach programs within in the correctional facility. **He plans to be heavily involved in freeing the innocent once he is exonerated.**

I say to each one of you...Be that voice! Be a leader! Make a positive change! The injustice we were served and the devastation of it almost cost all three of us our lives. You each have the power to not let this happen to another family by donating to this wonderful cause. **Your donation will help towards freeing the innocent and restoring separated families.**

I want to thank each of you for taking the time to hear my story. A special thank you to Rick's wonderful legal team, MIP, UMKC Law students and all the many volunteers because without your hard work and dedication we wouldn't have made it this far. Each of you will always hold a special place in our hearts.