



MEDIA CONTACT:

Lindsay Runnels
Office: 816-471-6694
Cell: 816-589-9241
lrunnels@morganpilate.com

Tricia Rojo Bushnell
Office: 816-931-4929
Cell: 805-901-5710
trojobushnell@themip.org

Matthew Jacober
Office: 314-613-2845
Cell: 314-707-3962
matthew.jacober@lathropgpm.com

Lamar Johnson’s Conviction Overturned

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St. Louis, Missouri

Today, Judge Mason vacated Lamar Johnson’s 1995 convictions and ordered his immediate release. He is a free man. We are relieved this injustice has finally met its end and are grateful to Kim Gardner and the Office of the Circuit Attorney for their support of Lamar’s innocence and their work reviewing his case. Based on evidence presented during a five-day evidentiary hearing in December, Judge Mason found what we have long known—Lamar Johnson is innocent.

While we are ecstatic to be welcoming Lamar home, his case is yet more one example of how difficult it is to overturn a wrongful conviction in Missouri, even where the prosecutor supports it. For decades, the Attorney General’s Office has fought every effort to secure Lamar Johnson his day in court, including the nearly four years it took to obtain this hearing. As a result, the Office was successful in keeping the facts of what happened to Lamar far from a public reckoning. Throughout it all, the Office never stopped claiming Lamar was guilty and was comfortable to have him languish and die in prison, and never—not once—did the Office acknowledge the weight of the evidence of Lamar’s innocence or that the State brazenly violated the Constitution at Lamar’s sham of a trial. Yet, when this State’s highest law enforcement office could hide from a courtroom no more, it presented nothing to challenge the overwhelming body of evidence that the Circuit Attorney and Lamar Johnson had amassed. The Attorney General’s political and unjust opposition to innocence cases must be addressed and corrected.

Since their review in 2018, Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner and the Conviction Integrity Unit have supported Lamar’s fight for freedom and remained steadfast in correcting the unjust convictions obtained by their office. Despite all obstacles put in her path, Ms. Gardner did not shy from the hard truths of this case and her courage to forge a path for Lamar and others deserves recognition. We also thank Jonathan Potts and Charlie Weiss, of [Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner](#), who joined the effort as Special Assistant Circuit Attorneys, and whose work helped expose the injustice and misconduct that have defined Lamar’s case since 1994.

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After more than 28 years in custody for a crime he did not commit, Lamar looks forward to spending time with his daughters and reconnecting with his family, feeling the ocean meet his feet, and enjoying a Dairy Queen Blizzard at the earliest opportunity. While today brings joy, nothing can restore all that the State stole from him. Nothing will give him back the nearly three decades he lost while separated from his daughters and family. The evidence that proved his innocence was available at his trial, but it was kept hidden or ignored by those who saw no value in the lives of two young Black men from the South Side. While today that nightmare ended for Lamar, we know it continues for so many others and our resolve for accountability remains.

It took an innocence organization, three law firms, the Circuit Attorney, both chambers of Missouri's legislature and the Governor's signature on a law passed for him, to free Lamar Johnson. That is intolerable. That is not justice. We can and must do better.

Lamar Johnson is represented by attorneys Lindsay Runnels and Kylie Mank of [Morgan Pilate LLC](#), Matthew Jacober and Alana McMullin of the law firm of [Lathrop GPM LLP](#), and Tricia Rojo Bushnell and Rachel Wester of the [Midwest Innocence Project](#) (MIP), along with MIP investigators Blair Johnson and Danielle Killingsworth, and paralegals Maci Morgan (Morgan Pilate) and Leigh Ann Carroll (MIP), and Keenan Baker (Lathrop GPM). Since opening Lamar's case in 2008, his investigation team has included MIP attorneys Alexandra Aparicio, Tiffany Murphy, and Laura O'Sullivan, as well as investigators Dan Grothaus and Quinn O'Brien, paralegal Matthew Peters, and law students from the UMKC and University of Missouri Schools of Law.

During the protracted appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court, Johnson and his legal team were supported by legal experts, prosecutors, innocence organizations, law professors, retired judges, elected officials, and exonerees from coast to coast. The community's support never faltered. We are deeply grateful for each of you.

Our hearts are with those who loved Marcus Boyd and all victims of wrongful convictions.

Lindsay Runnels
Kylie Mank
MORGAN PILATE LLC

Tricia Rojo Bushnell
Rachel Wester
MIDWEST INNOCENCE
PROJECT

Matthew Jacober
Alana McMullin
LATHROP GPM LLP

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