



December 10, 2024

Judge Vacates Wrongful Conviction of Cedric Warren in Kansas City, Kansas

A Wyandotte County judge yesterday vacated the murder convictions of our client Cedric Warren, who has spent more than 15 years in prison for a 2009 crime he did not commit.

After hearing closing arguments yesterday, Judge Aaron Roberts found that Cedric's constitutional rights were significantly violated during his unfair trial when the State failed to disclose evidence that the only person to identify Cedric in the double homicide suffered from a severe mental illness. The Wyandotte County District Attorney's Office's entire case against Cedric hinged on the testimony of this sole witness, who Kansas City, Kansas police dropped off at a psychiatric institution just after taking his statement. Yet that and much more exculpatory evidence – including that the witness, who was a paranoid schizophrenic, said he did not know who committed the crime – was hidden from Cedric's defense attorney, in what is known as a Brady violation.

No physical evidence tied Cedric to the Feb. 13, 2009, homicides of Larry LeDoux and Charles Ford. Cedric's fingerprints were not found at the crime scene, he did not possess the large sum of money or drugs taken during the crime, every DNA test on the physical evidence has excluded Cedric. The only evidence used to arrest Cedric was from the sole, mentally unstable witness, who reportedly gave the name "Ced" to the police, but later said he provided that name because it was given to him by detectives. The witness went on to give contradictory statements about what he claimed to have seen and when. Little did Cedric's defense attorney know at the time of his 2010 trial, but this witness heard voices, had serious memory issues, and was determined to be incompetent to stand trial in a criminal case, just a few years before Cedric's arrest, that was brought by the Wyandotte County District Attorney's Office.

As Judge Roberts noted in his ruling, any competent defense attorney would have used the undisclosed evidence to attack the sole witness' credibility. The Court questioned whether Cedric would have been prosecuted at all had the exculpatory material been disclosed, as was required under *Brady v. Maryland*.

Roberts limited his findings to the Brady violation, and did not rule on Cedric's actual innocence claim, as he narrowed the scope of a hearing earlier this year to the Brady issue. For now, Cedric will remain behind bars: Judge Roberts denied a motion to release Cedric on bond until the District Attorney's Office decides to dismiss the case or retry Cedric in the next 30 days.

Justice demands that Cedric come home following years of wrongful incarceration.

Cedric is represented by Morgan Pilate and the Midwest Innocence Project.