



Christopher E. Prince

In February 1994, a 12-year-old Caucasian girl claimed that an African-American man broke into her home in Culpeper, Virginia, and tried to have sex with her. She picked 18-year-old Christopher Prince out of a police lineup. Her accusation and identification were supported by her 11-year-old friend, who was in the house with her that night. Prince, who is borderline retarded, maintained his innocence, but his attorney advised him to enter a guilty plea in the hope of receiving a light sentence. On September 23, 1994, Prince pled no contest and was sentenced to 12 years in prison, with 6 years suspended.

After he was sentenced, Prince's parents hired a private investigator. When the investigator questioned the girls, both admitted that they had lied. At the request of the prosecutors, Prince's 12-year-old accuser submitted to a polygraph test, which convinced authorities that the two girls had lied and that Prince was innocent. On Prince's behalf, the prosecutor's office submitted a request for a pardon to the governor. Prince was pardoned by the governor in December 1995, after serving 15 months in prison.

Prince's parents spent almost \$25,000 on his defense, eventually losing their home and filing for bankruptcy, but the Virginia legislature declined to award Prince compensation for his wrongful conviction. Prince filed a civil suit for \$3 million against an investigator for the Culpeper town police, alleging that the investigator had pressured the girls to identify Prince as the intruder because of his race, and had suppressed evidence that one of the girls told a neighbor that she had made up the story about Prince's involvement. The lawsuit settled in 1999 for an undisclosed sum.

- *Stephanie Denzel*

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State:	Virginia
County:	Culpeper
Most Serious Crime:	Burglary/Unlawful Entry
Additional Convictions:	
Reported Crime Date:	1994
Convicted:	1994
Exonerated:	1995
Sentence:	6 to 12 years
Race:	Black
Sex:	Male
Age:	18
Contributing Factors:	Perjury or False Accusation
Did DNA evidence contribute to the exoneration?	No
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