

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Exonerated](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exonerated)

The Exonerated  
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
Jump to: navigation, search  
The Exonerated

GenreDrama  
Directed byBob Balaban  
Produced byGreg Schultz  
Steven Tabakin  
Karen Wolfe  
Written byErik Jensen  
Jessica Blank  
StarringDavid Brown Jr.  
Brian Dennehy  
Danny Glover  
Delroy Lindo  
Aidan Quinn  
Susan Sarandon  
Music byDavid Robbins  
Editing byAndy Keir  
CountryUnited States  
LanguageEnglish  
Original channelCourtTV  
Original airingJanuary 27, 2005  
Running time95 minutes

The Exonerated is a made-for-cable television film which dramatizes the true stories of six people who had been wrongfully convicted of murder and other offenses, placed on death row, and later exonerated and freed after serving varying years in prison. It was based on a successful stage play of the same name written by Erik Jensen and Jessica Blank and first aired on the former CourtTV cable television network on January 27, 2005. It is directed by Bob Balaban was produced by Radical Media.

Actors played the roles of the five men and one woman. It stars David Brown, Jr. (the only cast member to have appeared in the stage play) as Robert Earl Hayes, Brian Dennehy as Gary Gauger, Danny Glover as David Keaton, Delroy Lindo as Delbert Tibbs, Aidan Quinn as Kerry Max Cook and Susan Sarandon as Sonia "Sunny" Jacobs. The script was based on the exonerees' personal experiences as well as court records and media accounts.

Jessica Blank, who is married to Erik Jensen, got the idea for the play when she moved from Minneapolis, Minnesota to New York City. She and Jensen attended a conference about the death penalty and listened to stories about wrongful convictions and confessions gained via torture, threats and deception. The couple spent the summer of 2000 interviewing exonerees throughout the United States and adapted the stories of six people into a script.

The play was first presented in New York City; the final performance was in Minneapolis in 2002.

For their efforts, Jensen and Blank received the Champion of Justice Award from the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. [1]

[edit] The exonerated

Kerry Max Cook: Convicted of murdering a neighbor in Texas in 1977; exonerated in 1997.[1]

Gary Gauger: Convicted of murdering his mother and father in Illinois in 1993; exonerated in 1996.[2]

Robert Earl Hayes: Black Florida racetrack worker convicted of murdering a white woman in 1990; exonerated in 1997.[3] In 2004, the real Robert Hayes plead guilty to manslaughter and arson in a 1987 rape and murder in New York. He is now serving 15 to 45 years. He is also the prime suspect in rapes in Delaware and New Jersey.[4]

Sonia "Sunny" Jacobs: Convicted, along with common law husband, Jesse Tafero, and his friend, Walter Rhodes, of murdering Philip Black, a Florida state trooper and Donald Irwin, a visiting Canadian constable in 1976; plead no contest and was released in 1992.[5] Tafero was executed in 1990.

David Keaton: Convicted of murdering a Florida police officer in 1971; exonerated in 1973.[6]

Delbert Tibbs: Black Florida man convicted of murdering a white man and raping his girlfriend in 1974; exonerated in 1976. He was eventually freed in 1979 after serving time for an unrelated charge.[7]

Aidan Quinn reprised his role as Kerry Max Cook in The Exonerated's staging at the Dublin Theatre Festival in Dublin, Ireland in October, 2006 as well as the stage version in New York City. David Soul took over the role of Gary Gauger for several of the Dublin performances

[edit] References

^ <http://www.texnews.com/texas97/cook111297.html>

^ [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/law/jan-june00/deathpenalty\\_2-4.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/law/jan-june00/deathpenalty_2-4.html)

^ [http://www.law.northwestern.edu/depts/clinic/wrongful/exonerations/Hayes\\_FL.htm](http://www.law.northwestern.edu/depts/clinic/wrongful/exonerations/Hayes_FL.htm)

^ <http://www.fadp.org/news/Utica-20041119.htm>

^ <http://www.truthinjustice.org/soniajacobs.htm>

^ [http://www.deadlinethemovie.com/characters/david\\_keaton.php](http://www.deadlinethemovie.com/characters/david_keaton.php)

^ <http://itrs.scu.edu/bfl/delbert.html>

[edit] External links

Official website for "The Exonerated" movie

Erik Jensen and Jessica Blank audio interview

The Exonerated at the Internet Movie Database

## YEAR OF RELEASE: 1973

---

### 1. David Keaton *Florida Conviction: 1971, Charges Dismissed: 1973*

On the basis of mistaken identification and coerced confessions, Keaton was sentenced to death for murdering an off duty deputy sheriff during a robbery. The State Supreme Court reversed the conviction and granted Keaton a new trial because of newly discovered evidence. Charges were dropped and he was released after the actual killer was identified and convicted. (Keaton v. State, 273 So.2d 385 (1973)).



Read ["The Stigma is Always There"](#) by Sydney Freedberg in *The St. Petersburg Times*

## 'The stigma is always there'

By SYDNEY P. FREEDBERG

© St. Petersburg Times

July 4, 1999

### [Main story](#)

['We'd rather have died than to stay in that place for something we didn't do'](#)

['I had nothing . . . The world I left no longer existed'](#)

['We don't look back'](#)

['Yes, I'm angry. . . . Yes, I'm bitter. I'm frustrated'](#)

['The stigma is always there'](#)

[The 13 other survivors and their stories](#)

Twenty-six years after Dave Roby Keaton escaped death, he is still trying to rebuild a life.

In his hometown of Quincy in the Florida Panhandle, Keaton, 47, earns \$6.95 an hour as a tree trimmer, feeding oak and sweet gum branches into a wood chipper. He never misses a day.

But he has trouble choosing from a restaurant menu. He can't utter the name of his grandmother, who died while he was on death row, without tears. He drinks too much gin when he is tense. And when he passes the town theater, he flashes back to Jan. 10, 1971, the night police hauled him in for questioning shortly after he had returned home from a movie.

An off-duty deputy sheriff named Khomas Revels had been shot to death during a convenience store robbery. Witnesses saw no more than four black men, but authorities arrested five, including Keaton, 18.

So began the case Florida newspapers called the "Quincy Five."

Using threats and lies, sheriff's deputies coerced confessions out of Keaton after three days of relentless interrogation. The details of those confessions differed sharply from the state's evidence -- including the number of participants, the weapons used and the parking place of the getaway car. But an all-white jury convicted Keaton and Johnny Frederick. Frederick got life, and Keaton was sentenced to death. A third defendant was acquitted, and charges against the other two were dropped.

In his death row cell, Keaton prayed for sunshine during yard time and dreamed about his grandmother. He read books about Jewish mysticism, wrote poems for his mother and slept "as much as I could." The cell was so narrow that the 6-foot-2 Keaton could walk up the wall by stretching his arms and legs to both sides of the cell.

Meanwhile, the case against him quickly unraveled. Newspapers disclosed that the polygraph operator who extracted the confessions had a history of obtaining false confessions from frightened suspects without lawyers.

Four months after his conviction, a grand jury indicted three more men for the same murder, based on fingerprints at the scene after a tip from an informant. All three were eventually convicted.

Evidence in those cases prompted the courts to order a new trial for Keaton and Frederick, and in July 1973 the state decided not to try them again, claiming witnesses were too ill.

Keaton was serving time for an unrelated robbery case and had six years to go. He was not released until 1979.

He got a job cleaning cars, then a better one cleaning offices. But at times, Keaton preferred locking himself in his apartment. "People would say, 'What are you doing, Dave? You're free.' "

By 1983, he says, he was bouncing from woman to woman, losing weight and bingeing on crack cocaine. When he woke up in a panic one night, thinking he was going to die, he backed away from the drugs. But the restlessness continued. "The stigma is always there," he says.

For five years, Keaton has spent his workdays turning trees into mulch -- "a tedious little job where you don't have to think too much."

He doesn't talk about death row, not even with his family. Listening in on parts of the interview recently, Rutha Mae Keaton heard details about her son's prison ordeal for the first time.

Last year, he moved into a four-room house his mother built. Supportive relatives visit him, but Keaton says he's basically alone with his dog, *Waleza*, a mix of Rottweiler and pit bullterrier. He enjoys meditating in the piney woods nearby.

Keaton says the rent gets paid and the laundry done, but since death row, he doesn't stop thinking about what he wants most — a woman and a challenging job. He gets mad at himself for not getting into the Christmas spirit or buying presents for his family.

"Prison changed me," he says. "You build a wall to keep from being hurt, and it's hard to break down. . . . Sometimes I feel like an outcast, like prison turned me into an island."

[http://witness-to-innocence.com/view\\_stories.php?David-Keaton-9](http://witness-to-innocence.com/view_stories.php?David-Keaton-9)

David Keaton was arrested in 1971 for the murder of an off-duty police officer at a Florida convenience store. After three days of relentless interrogation – with threats, lies, and beatings – investigators coerced a confession from him. Although details of the number of participants in the crime, the weapons used, and the location of the “getaway car” differed sharply from the state’s evidence, an all-white jury convicted David and he was sentenced to death. He was 18 years old.

Once he was on death row, the case against David quickly unraveled. Journalists revealed that the polygraph operator in his case had a history of extracting false confessions from frightened suspects without lawyers. Fingerprints from the scene and a tip from an informant led prosecutors to the real culprits, who were indicted and later convicted for the murder. David was granted a new trial, but without the confession, there was not enough evidence to try him and the charges were eventually dropped. Ultimately, he spent two years on death row for a crime he didn’t commit.

The first man to be exonerated from death row in the United States, David is an outstanding poet and an active member of Witness to Innocence. Danny Glover played him in the motion picture *The Exonerated*.