



Ted Bradford

Ted Louis Bradford spent almost 10 years in prison for a rape he didn't commit—and another four years awaiting a new trial—before he was retried and acquitted based on DNA evidence of his innocence in 2010.

The Crime

On the morning of September 29, 1995, in Yakima, Washington, a young woman was in her living room feeding her one-month-old infant son when she heard an unfamiliar noise in the hallway. The woman saw a man approaching her wearing a white nylon-stocking mask. She tried to flee with her baby, but the man grabbed her from behind and tackled her. The man demanded that she not look at him but allowed her to put her baby back in his crib before he forced the woman into her basement.

In the basement, the man handcuffed the woman and put a Lone Ranger-style mask over her face before pushing her to the floor and raping her. Adhesive tape had been placed over the eyeholes in advance, apparently to prevent the victim from identifying the perpetrator. He later dragged the woman up the stairs and took her into the infant's bedroom, where he tied her to the crib using a coat hanger and the loops in her belt. The man then left the woman, with her mask still on, in the infant's room.

The woman told police that the man was wearing black jeans with a dull red and blue checkered flannel jacket and white gloves. Despite the stocking covering his face, the woman described the man as Caucasian or a light-skinned Hispanic, stocky, with dark hair or dark blond hair. She also described the man as about six feet tall or "half a head" taller than her husband. He "was a giant to me," she reportedly told police.

Bradford was arrested six months later in April 1996 in connection with a series of indecent exposure incidents in the victim's neighborhood. Investigators believed Bradford may have been connected to the rape and interrogated him for eight hours and subjected him to a polygraph test. After five hours, Bradford admitted that he "probably" committed the rape. Bradford's confession, however, contained numerous inconsistent details concerning the crime. An attorney sent by Bradford's wife was denied access to Bradford because police said Bradford could only speak with him if he requested an attorney. The victim in the case never identified Bradford as her attacker. Two neighbors said they had seen a white Toyota Tercel similar to Bradford's near the scene of the crime; one said she had seen Bradford driving the car around the neighborhood that day. Based on his admission and the neighbor's identification, Bradford was charged with the crime.

The Trial

Bradford said he was at work when the rape occurred, but a clerical error at his job incorrectly showed that Bradford was off that day. When police confronted Bradford about this discrepancy, he changed his story saying he was not at work that day. He later said that he changed his story because he was confused by the clerical error. At trial, Bradford's wife testified that she had picked him up from work for a scheduled vasectomy, and a co-

State: Washington

County: Yakima

Most Serious Crime: Sexual Assault

Additional Convictions: Burglary/Unlawful Entry

Reported Crime Date: 1995

Convicted: 1996

Exonerated: 2010

Sentence: 13 years

Race: Caucasian

Sex: Male

Age: 23

Contributing Factors: Mistaken Witness ID, False Confession

Did DNA evidence contribute to the exoneration? Yes
:

worker also testified that he had teased Bradford about the operation. Bradford's timecard indicated he was at work and he was paid for that day.

Despite no physical evidence linking him to the crime and the fact that he was only 5'7"—significantly shorter than the victim's description—Bradford was convicted of rape and burglary and sentenced to 10 years in prison based on the strength of his confession and the neighbor's testimony. The court of appeals upheld his conviction, ruling that Bradford's confession had not been coerced and that the detectives' refusal to allow Bradford's attorney to speak with his client during the interrogation did not violate his constitutional rights.

Post-Conviction

Bradford served nine years in prison before being released on community supervision. Although the Innocence Project Northwest Clinic, based at the University of Washington School of Law, began working on Bradford's case in 2002, it took years to complete the several rounds of DNA testing. Meanwhile, Bradford was still required to register as a sex offender as part of his community supervision.

After the IPNW successfully obtained DNA testing on Bradford's behalf, analysts from the Washington state crime lab tested samples from the adhesive tape used on the mask. The tests returned two profiles. One was consistent with the victim and the other was an unknown man, not Bradford. The DNA of the same unknown man was on both the adhesive side of the tape and the non-adhesive side. Moreover, another distinct male profile was found on the backside of the victim's jeans. In light of this new evidence, the Washington State Court of Appeals formally reversed Bradford's conviction in 2007. In its decision, the court wrote: "Since male DNA was present, and it was not Mr. Bradford's, the inference is that the unidentified male devised the mask. And, the victim's testimony that the assailant kept pushing the mask back over her eyes supports an inference that Mr. Bradford was not the perpetrator; otherwise, his DNA would have been present."

Yakima county prosecutors, still convinced that Bradford was the perpetrator, decided to retry him. The second trial ended in February 2010, with a jury acquitting Bradford, now 36, of first-degree rape and burglary after just five hours of deliberation. It took nearly 15 years before justice was served, but Bradford finally cleared his name.

*Summary courtesy of the Innocence Project,
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School and the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University School of Law.

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Ted Bradford



Incident Date: 9/29/95
Jurisdiction: WA
Charge: First-degree rape and First-degree burglary
Conviction: First-degree rape and First-degree burglary
Sentence:

Year of Conviction: 1996
Exoneration Date: 2/11/10
Sentence Served: 10 Years
Real perpetrator found? Not Yet
Contributing Causes: Eyewitness Misidentification, False Confessions / Admissions
Compensation? Not Yet

Photo: Innocence Project Northwest

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Bradford served nine years in prison before being released on parole. After his release, the , based at the University of Washington, took Bradford's case and sought DNA testing. Bradford was still required to register as a sex offender as part of his parole.

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