

FACES of FAILING PUBLIC DEFENSE SYSTEMS

Portraits of Michigan's Constitutional Crisis

APRIL 2011



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The ACLU, the ACLU of Michigan and the Michigan Campaign for Justice would like to thank the State Bar of Michigan, the Michigan State Appellate Defender Office, the Michigan Innocence Clinic at The University of Michigan Law School, The Cooley Innocence Project at The Thomas M. Cooley Law School, and the Innocence Project.

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WAYNE COUNTY: Third Judicial Circuit Court

Conviction vacated in 2004. Pled *nolo contendere* to lesser charges.

THE COST: Incarceration: \$60,000 (2 years)

WHAT WENT WRONG: Mr. Woods court-appointed attorney lacked adequate knowledge of criminal procedure. As a result, he:

- Failed to challenge a photo lineup.
- Did not request funding to hire necessary expert.
- Failed to file necessary pre-trial motions and as a result could not present alibi witnesses at trial.

DAVIEN WOODS

Original conviction vacated after two years in prison; pled guilty to lesser charges and received a sentence of time served.

In 2002, 18-year old Davien Woods was convicted of carjacking, armed robbery and felony possession of a firearm, primarily because his public defense attorney failed to notify the court within the requisite time period that he intended to present an alibi defense. As a result, Mr. Woods' alibi witnesses were unable to testify at trial and Mr. Woods spent two years in prison before the Michigan Court of Appeals overturned his conviction.

Background

At 5 a.m. on September 24, 2001, two men accosted a customer at a Detroit gas station and stole his car at

gunpoint. Three days later, a police officer patrolling a school crosswalk flagged down a speeding car in which Mr. Woods was a passenger. The car was the one that had been stolen from the gas station. Mr. Woods and the others in the car were arrested, charged with possession of stolen property, and jailed.

Mr. Woods was charged after an improper photographic lineup.

The following day, the car's owner picked Mr. Woods out of a photo lineup and identified him as one of the

two carjackers. Michigan state law prohibits the use of photo lineups when the accused is in jail and physically able to participate in an in-person lineup. Detroit police, however, never placed Mr. Woods in an in-person lineup.

Based solely on the car owner's identification, Mr. Woods was charged with armed robbery, carjacking, and felony possession of a firearm. His case was referred to Wayne County's Third Judicial Circuit Court for prosecution.

The public defense attorney appointed to represent Mr. Woods did not prepare for trial.

According to Mr. Woods, he and the attorney met for fewer than ten minutes before trial. During that brief conversation he told the attorney that both his brother and his grandmother could testify that he had been sleeping on a pullout bed in his grandmother's living room when the incident occurred. The attorney did not contact either witness and did little to prepare Mr. Woods' case.

Mr. Woods' attorney did not challenge the photo lineup.

The public defense attorney did nothing to challenge the improper use of the photo lineup in lieu of the in-person lineup or the car owner's identification of Mr. Woods. Although research demonstrates that eyewitness identifications are often inaccurate, the attorney did not consult with or retain an expert on the unreliability of such identifications and later acknowledged that he had never



ABOVE: Davien Woods and Davien Jr. (Photo by Stephanie Chang)

utilized an identification expert in the 20 years that he had practiced law.

The public defense attorney failed to present Mr. Woods' alibi witnesses.

Although the attorney attempted to call Mr. Woods' brother as an alibi witness, he was prevented from doing so because he had not given the prosecutor and the trial court timely notice of Mr. Woods' alibi defense. Michigan state law requires that defense counsel provide the court and the prosecutor with notice of an alibi defense at least ten days prior to trial. The attorney later admitted that he was unaware of the time period within which he had to provide notice.

After listening to new evidence presented by Mr. Woods' appellate attorney, the trial judge ruled that Mr. Woods' trial attorney had "unequivocally" provided ineffective assistance of counsel.

The public defense attorney made no effort to locate the real perpetrator.

The driver of the stolen car pled guilty to his part in the carjacking immediately prior to Mr. Woods' trial. He testified on Mr. Woods' behalf that he and a friend known as "K-9" had planned and committed the crime. Mr. Woods' attorney made no effort to ascertain K-9's true identity or to confirm his participation in the offense.

Mr. Woods was convicted and sentenced to between 70 months and 15 years in prison.

Mr. Woods's conviction was vacated after the court found that his trial attorney had provided ineffective assistance of counsel.

In preparation for an appeal, Mr. Woods' court-appointed appellate attorney arranged for both Mr. Woods and the convicted car driver to take polygraph tests regarding Mr. Woods' non-involvement in the carjacking. They both passed. The attorney also located "K-9" who admitted that he had in fact participated in the carjacking. Based on this new evidence, the Michigan Court of Appeals remanded Mr. Woods' case to the trial court for a hearing on the adequacy of Mr. Wood's legal representation at trial.

The trial court vacated Mr. Woods' conviction and ordered that he be provided with a new trial. The judge said Mr. Woods' attorney had "unequivocally" provided ineffective assistance of counsel, having failed, among other things, "to move for suppression of identification;" "to adequately investigate and prepare the case;" and "to communicate on a regular basis with his client."

Fearful that he would remain in prison if he continued to assert his innocence and without any guarantee that his second trial attorney would be any better than his first, Mr. Woods pled no contest to lesser charges and was sentenced to time served.

Mr. Woods currently lives with his girlfriend, mother, and grandmother, is the father of four children and is working with his uncle in the construction and landscaping business. His criminal record has impeded his ability to find other types of work.

Neither of Mr. Wyniemko's attorneys asked to have the stains on the victim's underwear analyzed or to have the stains on the bed sheet subjected to DNA analysis. Without sufficient time to prepare, the second attorney did not cross-examine the victim on the discrepancies between her description of the rapist's age, height and weight and Mr. Wyniemko's age, height and weight; was unable to establish that the snitch had only agreed to testify after the lead detective and prosecuting attorney told him that "he would never see the light of day" if he did not; and did not call as witnesses any other former girlfriends, at least two of whom could have contradicted the girlfriend who testified.

Mr. Wyniemko was convicted and sentenced to between 40 and 60 years, beyond the maximum mandated by Michigan's sentencing guidelines. The court justified the sentence by stating that Mr. Wyniemko had not shown appropriate remorse.

DNA evidence exonerated Mr. Wyniemko after nine years in prison.

Mr. Wyniemko's initial efforts to overturn his conviction failed. He later told a newspaper reporter, "There were moments when I actually thought I had died and gone to hell. Prison was hell. I knew that I was innocent and I never gave up hope."

In 2001, the Cooley Law School Innocence Project agreed to take Mr. Wyniemko's case. It located the biological evidence collected at the crime scene and had it subjected to DNA testing, which established that Mr.

Wyniemko could not have been the rapist. The DNA of an unidentified male was found on a cigarette butt, in scrapings under the victim's fingernails and on semen-stained nylons used as a gag on the victim.

On June 17, 2003, a Macomb County Circuit Judge declared Mr. Wyniemko "an innocent man" and released him from prison. Mr. Wyniemko now refers to that day as his second birthday. Together with friends and family, he traveled from the courthouse to his father's grave. His father had died in 2000, after spending almost his entire life savings trying to help his son. Mr. Wyniemko believes that his father's death was caused by the stress of his incarceration.

In 2005, Clinton Township agreed to pay Mr. Wyniemko close to \$4 million to settle a wrongful imprisonment case. In 2008, prosecutors announced that a known sex-offender, Craig Gonser, had been identified as the rapist but that he could not be tried for the crime because of the statute of limitations.

ENDNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

- 1 The cost of incarceration for each individual profiled in this booklet was calculated by multiplying \$30,000, the annual average cost of incarcerating a single individual, by the number of years he or she was incarcerated. See Michigan Department of Corrections, 2009 Annual Report, at 5, available at http://michigan.gov/documents/corrections/2009_AnnualReport_341903_7.pdf (last viewed on Mar. 14, 2011).
- 2 Michael Van Beek, *New State Data Shows Michigan Public Schools Spent Record Amount Per-Student*, Michigan Capitol Confidential, July 28, 2010, available at <http://www.michigancapitolconfidential.com/13248> (last viewed on Feb. 2, 2011).
- 3 In Michigan, Medicaid services cost only about \$790 per child per year. Eva Yulita Nugraheni, *Failure of Federal Medicaid Fund Extension: Michigan Impact*, Michigan Policy Network (June 21, 2010) available at http://www.michiganpolicy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=821:failure-of-federal-medicaid-fund-extension-michigan-impact&catid=43:health-care-policy-briefs&Itemid=159 (last viewed on February 2, 2011).
- 4 *Gideon v. Wainright*, 372 U.S. 335 (1963).
- 5 *Id.* at 344.
- 6 *McMann v. Richardson*, 397 U.S. 759, 771 (1970) (emphasis added).
- 7 *United States v. Cronin*, 466 U.S. 648, 656 (1984). See also *Jones v. Barnes*, 463 U.S. 745, 758 (1983) (Brennan, J., dissenting); *Ferri v. Ackerman*, 444 U.S. 193, 204 (1979).
- 8 *Herring v. New York*, 422 U.S. 853, 862 (1975). See *Nix v. Williams*, 467 U.S. 431, 453 (1984) (a criminal conviction is to be the product of an adversarial process, rather than the *ex parte* investigation and determination of the prosecution); *Wheat v. United States*, 486 U.S. 153, 158 (1988) (the right to counsel “was designed to assure fairness in the adversary criminal process”).
- 9 *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668, 687 (1984).
- 10 *Id.*, at 688.
- 11 *Id.*
- 12 *Id.*
- 13 *Id.*
- 14 *Id.* at 691. See *United States v. Tucker*, 716 F.2d 376, 581 (9th Cir. 1983); *Gaines v. Hopper*, 575 F.2d 1147, 1149-50 (5th Cir. 1978).
- 15 *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. at 688-89. See *United States v. Gray*, 878 F.2d 702, 711 (3d Cir. 1989); *Adams v. Balkcom*, 688 F.2d 734, 739 (11th Cir. 1982); *United States v. Kaufman*, 109 F.3d 186, 190 (3d Cir. 1997); *Davis v. Alabama*, 596 F.2d 1214, 1217 (5th Cir. 1979); *McQueen v. Swenson*, 489 F.2d 207, 217-18 (8th Cir. 1974).
- 16 *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. at 688-89.

- 17 American Bar Association, *Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System* (Feb. 2002), available at <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/downloads/sclaid/indigentdefense/tenprinciplesbooklet.pdf> (last viewed on Mar. 17, 2011).
- 18 *Cf. Robertson v. Jackson*, 972 F.2d 529 (4th Cir. 1992) (holding that although administration of a food stamp program was turned over to local authorities, “ultimate responsibility . . . remains at the state level.”); *Omunson v. State*, 17 P.3d 236 (Idaho 2000) (holding that where a duty has been delegated to a local agency, the state maintains “ultimate responsibility” and must step in if the local agency cannot provide the necessary services).
- 19 The Sentencing Project, *Reducing Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice System* (2008), available at http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd_reducingracialdisparity.pdf (last viewed Mar. 17, 2011).
- 20 *See, e.g. Johnson v. Oklahoma*, 484 U.S. 878 (1987) (parity in access to experts); *Wardius v. Oregon*, 412 U.S. 470 (1973) (parity in discovery); *Washington v. Texas*, 388 U.S. 14 (1967) (parity in offering testimony of and compelling attendance of witnesses); *Gregory v. United States*, 369 F.2d 185, 188 (D.C. Cir. 1966) (parity in access to witnesses).
- 21 *See, e.g., Report of the Defense Services Committee*, Michigan State Bar Journal (Mar. 1978); *Proposed Minimum Standards for Court-Appointed Criminal Trial Counsel*, Michigan Bar Journal (Sept. 1986); Thomas E. Daniels, *Gideon’s Hollow Promise – How Appointed Counsel Are Prevented from Fulfilling Their Role in the Criminal Justice System*, Michigan State Bar Journal (Feb. 1992); Barbara R. Levine, *Funding Indigent Criminal Defense in Michigan*, Michigan State Bar Journal (Feb. 1992); State Bar of Michigan Defender Systems and Services Committee, *Indigent Defense Contracts in Michigan*, Michigan State Bar Journal (Feb. 1992); Frank D. Eaman, *A Model System for Indigent Defense Services*, Michigan State Bar Journal (Feb. 1992); National Legal Aid and Defender Association, *A Race to the Bottom: Speed and Savings Over Due Process: A Constitutional Crisis* (June 2008), available at http://www.mynlada.org/michigan/michigan_report.pdf (last viewed on March 17, 2011).
- 22 National Legal Aid and Defender Association, *A Race to the Bottom: Speed and Savings Over Due Process: A Constitutional Crisis*, *supra*.

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Davien Woods

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