

Innocent Behind Bars

8 x 60' Series

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Dennish Maher - 19 Years in Prison

Dennis Maher was a young paratrooper living in Lowell, Massachusetts and worked at the army barracks in the neighbouring town of Ayer. On the night of November 17th, 1983 Dennis was walking down the street when a policeman stopped him – he looked like the suspect who had raped a woman earlier that night and the night before. Dennis was taken into police custody, charged with a third rape in Ayer and was identified as the rapist by all three victims. He was sentenced to life in prison and incarcerated at a treatment facility for sexually dangerous prisoners. However, Dennis was innocent, and he knew DNA evidence could prove it. He wrote to the New England Innocence Project who took on his case and sought testing of the rape kits. Witness misidentification and official miscount resulted in nineteen years behind bars for Dennis, devastating both him and the victims. He was exonerated in 2003 and received an apology from his original prosecutor, J.W. Carney, Jr., which helped him move on with his life.

2. Kwame Ajamu - 28 Years in Prison

Kwame Ajamu, his older brother Wiley and their friend, Ricky Jackson were raised in Cleveland in the 1970's. As teenagers, they had their lives ahead of them until they were accused of a brutal robbery and murder in May 1975. A twelve-year-old boy, Eddie Vernon told the police, Kwame, Wiley and Ricky were the culprits. At just seventeen-years-old, Kwame was tried as an adult and the three teenagers were sentenced to death; a sentence that was thankfully commuted to life in prison. After twenty-eight years, Kwame was released on parole and began his investigation into what really happened that day. He enlisted the help of investigative journalist, Kyle Swenson who uncovered the truth. This revelation was powerful enough to free Wiley and Ricky from prison and exonerate all three men after thirty-nine years. Kwame was finally reunited with his brother and friend.

3. Kristine Bunch - 17 Years in Prison

Kristine Bunch was a 21-year old single mother, living in a trailer park with her three-year-old son, Tony. One summer night in June 1995, as the pair slept, a fire started in the trailer and tragically killed Tony. Within hours of the firefighters arriving, the scene was classified an arson and Kristine was charged with the murder of her son. Scared and unable to grieve for her child, Kristine was awaiting trial when she discovered she was pregnant. She gave birth to her second son, Trent behind bars and began her fight to prove her innocence and return home to her baby. Seventeen years later, Kristine and her 'A-team' of lawyers disproved the fire science that convicted her, and she was finally exonerated in 2012. As a free woman, Kristine founded JustIs4JustUs to support exonerees and has reconnected with her now-adult son.

4. John Button - 5 Years in Prison

5. Derrick Jamison - 20 Years on Death Row

Derrick Jamison was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. He had learning difficulties and a good heart but was led astray in a bad neighbourhood, which resulted in an early life of felony theft. In August 1984, two men robbed a bar and assaulted the bartender, who later died in hospital from his injuries. Derrick was identified by his alleged accomplice, convicted for murder and sentenced to death. He languished on death row, desperate to prove his innocence as he faced execution six times. Eventually Derrick's attorneys were able to prove the prosecution withheld critical evidence that proved his innocence. Derrick was exonerated from death row on October 25th, 2005; twenty years to the day he was sentenced to die.

6. Kian Khatibi - 10 Years in Prison

In February 1997, Kian Khatibi returned to his hometown of Pleasantville, New York to reunite with friends at a college bar. After a misunderstanding, Kian was ejected from the bar and started to make his way home when he encountered a group of men in a heated argument in the parking lot. Kian passed them and eventually took a ride home with his sister and brother. Days later, Kian found himself charged with a stabbing that occurred in that same parking lot and was sentenced to fourteen years behind bars. With the motivation to make the best of a bad situation, Kian worked in the prison kitchen and studied in the law library to provide his own defense. He refused to admit to something he didn't do, knowing he would subsequently be denied parole. Eventually Kian was able to prove his innocence and was released from prison after serving ten years. Kian went on to finish his studies and passed the bar exam to become a practicing lawyer in New York City.

7. Herman Lindsey - 3 Years on Death Row

Herman Lindsey experienced a difficult upbringing and turned to committing petty crimes with his cousin, Ronnie LoRay to get by. Unfortunately, this relation would eventually be his downfall. In April 1994 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, two men robbed the Big Dollar pawn shop and killed the shop clerk in the process; Ronnie LoRay was a prime suspect. Herman was questioned about the crime, but it wasn't until twelve years later in 2006 that the police arrested Herman as Ronnie's accomplice. The evidence was circumstantial, and Ronnie LoRay denied Herman's involvement, but the jury found Herman guilty and sentenced him to death. He spent three years on Florida's death row before his public defender was able to file an appeal and plead Herman's case before the Justices of the Florida Supreme court. Herman was finally released from prison and was able to return to his family.

8. Ron Keine - 2 Years on Death Row

Ron Keine never felt like he belonged until he joined a motorcycle club in his twenties. He and his best friend, Do left their home in Detroit, Michigan to ride their motorcycles around the United States, finally settling in California. They soon became tired of the gang life and set out on a road trip back to Detroit with some motorcycle club mates but along the way their plans were derailed when they were charged with a violent murder in Albuquerque. Ron and his three friends were

found guilty, sentenced to death and left for dead on New Mexico's death row, despite the fact they had proof they were in Arizona at the time of the murder. Fortunately, their story reached Stephen Cain at the Detroit News, who led an investigation to clear the biker's name. The four bikers languished on death row for two years before they were finally proven innocent and released. Ron returned to Detroit where he forged a whole new life for himself, including a business and family. The others weren't so lucky.