



NEW
ENGLAND
INNOCENCE
PROJECT

VOICES OF THE INNOCENT **AGAINST ALL ODDS**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023 | 6:00 P.M.
CITY WINERY | 80 BEVERLY ST., BOSTON, MA 02114

PROGRAM BOOK



#VOICESOFTHEINNOCENT

Dear Friends,

We are thrilled to convene this community again – for the first time in person since 2019 – to hear from people directly impacted by wrongful convictions. **Voices of the Innocent: Against All Odds** is a special storytelling event centered around a theme that is so prevalent in this work: the challenges people face after being wrongfully convicted and what it takes to persevere in the face of that.

Every wrongfully convicted person faces tremendous odds on their journey to freedom. They face difficulty getting help with their case when there are so few resources available post conviction. They face fierce resistance to reexamining their case from prosecutors and the Courts. They face skepticism from parole boards and the media, making it extremely difficult to shift the public narrative. And even if they manage to succeed in obtaining freedom, they face the reality of navigating a new world without financial or other support from the government that wrongfully convicted them.

At the New England Innocence Project, we are dismayed but not daunted by these odds. We build a team around each wrongfully convicted person so that we can fight alongside them; having investigators, experts, and skilled litigators develop and present a true narrative about the case; and build the Exoneree Network's resources to support the needs of freed people and their families.

Together, with your support, wrongfully convicted people can beat the odds. So, please join us in this fight, support this tremendous work, and witness the stories and wisdom shared at this special event. We can't wait to experience it with you.

Sincerely,

Radha Natarajan

Radha Natarajan
Executive Director,
New England Innocence Project

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*Social Service Advocate,
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ABOUT THE NEW ENGLAND INNOCENCE PROJECT



The New England Innocence Project is a social justice non-profit that works to correct and prevent wrongful convictions and fights injustice within the criminal legal system for innocent people imprisoned for a crime they did not commit. Our team provides free forensic testing, investigation, experts, and an experienced legal team to exonerate the innocent

and bring them home to their loved ones. We provide exoneree support through the peer-led Exoneree Network and use our expertise about wrongful convictions to provide education and advocate for legislative and judicial reforms to prevent future tragedies.

ABOUT THE EXONEREE NETWORK

The Exoneree Network is a peer-led initiative funded by the New England Innocence Project to support the practical, emotional, and spiritual reentry needs of exonerees and freed people as they work to rebuild their lives in freedom.

While every release and reunion after years of wrongful incarceration is joyous, it is not always easy. Since there is no existing infrastructure to assist an innocent person who spent decades in prison for a crime they did not commit, exonerees returning from long-term incarceration must rebuild from almost nothing.

The Exoneree Network fosters a welcoming community for freed people and helps to provide much needed support — from housing assistance and psychological support to phones and technological training, and more.



FOLLOW THE EXONEREE NETWORK:



NEIP STAFF



**Radha
Natarajan**

Executive Director



Laura Carey

Staff Attorney



Kari Cincotta

Supervising Attorney



Sean Ellis

*Director,
Exoneree Network*



Benjamin Evans

*Forensic Science
Justice Fellow*



Sean Graham

*Community Reentry
& Program Specialist,
Exoneree Network*



Mike Hamman

Staff Attorney



**Stephaine
Roberts Hartung**

Senior Staff Attorney



Avni Kacker

*Case Operations
Manager*



**Cynthia
Mousseau**

Staff Attorney



Carolina Nunes

*Operations
Administrator, NEIP &
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*Development
Coordinator*



**Jordan
Salvatoriello**

*Director of Development
& Communications*



Shar'Day Taylor

*Social Service Advocate,
NEIP & Exoneree
Network*



PROGRAM OUTLINE

6:00 PM

Food & Refreshments

7:00 PM

Welcome & Acknowledgements

David Harris

Board of Trustees

My Story - Against All Odds

Jabir Pope

Nancy Wagner

Yesenia Valentin

Make Freedom Possible

Radha Natarajan

Executive Director

**Presentation of the Arc of Justice Award
to Andrew Ryan**

David Siegel

Board Chair

Dessert & Coffee served in the Concert Hall

8:45 PM

Community Conversation

Jabir Pope, Nancy Wagner,
Yesenia Valentin, and Andrew Ryan

STORYTELLERS

We are grateful to our storytellers, all of whom have been directly impacted by the tragedy of wrongful convictions and who courageously share about the injustices they have suffered in order to prevent others from experiencing the same fate.



JABIR POPE

Jabir Pope was wrongfully convicted of a Boston murder and spent 38 years in prison. He was granted a new trial based on official misconduct including the failure of prosecutors to turn over exculpatory evidence. Jabir was freed on December 9, 2021 and had all charges against him dropped on October 24, 2022. Jabir has a daughter and grandson and loves music. He had his inaugural Moth storytelling debut at the 2023 Annual Innocence Network Conference.



NANCY WAGNER

Nancy Wagner (previously Nancy McGeoghean) was wrongfully convicted of the murder of her beloved daughter, Sarah. She spent 30 years in prison before she was able to demonstrate through scientific evidence from multiple experts that Sarah's death was a tragic accident. Nancy's case is similar to those of many other women wrongfully convicted of harming their children, cases where no crime actually occurred. Nancy was freed in 2020 and in 2023, she was granted a new trial and accepted an Alford plea, maintaining her innocence while getting closure in this nightmare. She loves dogs (she trained 10 for people with disabilities while still in prison) and her husband, Ray.



YESENIA VALENTIN

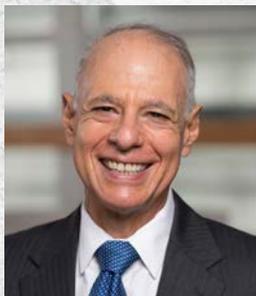
Yesenia Valentin is a community activist helping people realize their strength and overcome their struggles. She has been a single, determined mother since the age of 20. She has fought for her parents in both the medical and judicial systems and has been a resilient daughter who had been separated from her father because of his wrongful conviction. Having grown up in the streets of Boston, with homelessness and hunger pains plaguing black and brown communities, she is a devout believer in Jesus Christ and a fierce survivor. Yesenia's vision is to run for elected office where she can implement change for underserved and underrepresented communities.

ADDITIONAL SPEAKERS



DAVID HARRIS

David Harris retired in 2023 as managing director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, a position he held since 2006. David has been working to build up the Justflix project, which uses a train-the-trainer model for young people to use their cell phones to create short videos documenting racial and social justice, social service, and activism in their communities. He chairs the Mass Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and co-leads a coalition, Who Governs the Governor's Council, to increase awareness of this elected body and its critical role in the administration of the legal system in the Commonwealth. He currently serves on the NEIP Board of Trustees.



DAVID SIEGEL

David M. Siegel is a Professor of Law at New England Law | Boston, where he teaches Comparative Criminal Procedure, Criminal Advocacy, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Clinical Evidence and Evidence. His writing addresses the fairness and accuracy of the criminal process in the US and other countries, including forensic mental health issues and the ethical obligations of defense lawyers and prosecutors. A founding Trustee of NEIP, he currently chairs its Board of Trustees.



ARTIST SUPPORTERS

The New England Innocence Project thanks the following artists for sharing their talent and supporting the fight against wrongful convictions.

A REVOLUTIONARY PRESS

The Team

Cleopatra Redbird is an artist and activist born to the mountains of Vermont. They have dedicated their life to supporting others through art making and trauma-informed practices. Cleopatra is Co-Director of an art nonprofit that focuses on creating safe spaces for individual and communal healing from all levels of trauma. They are constantly learning and advocating for new ways forward.

John Vincent, a retired police officer, founded A Revolutionary Press in 2010 as a nonprofit letterpress print shop with a mission to print and promote Radical and Revolutionary Ideals.

A Revolutionary Press located in New Haven, Vermont prints and disseminates Radical & Revolutionary ideals to impel the People to Creatively Act on their Right and their Duty to alter or abolish the Present Form of Government and institute a New and more Humane Form of Self Government. We design and print the old fashioned way, one l-e-t-t-e-r at a time and whenever one of the hand or foot powered printing presses completes a full Revolution, some sort of Art Happens! The work of the Press is a collaborative effort of social justice artists who volunteer their time to design and print broadsides with messages of empowerment, peace and love. The Press donates all income from the sale of this work to other nonprofits that perform the front line work for nonviolence and social justice.

Once more, A Revolutionary Press is so very honored for this opportunity to collaborate with and to support the work of the Exonerée Network and New England Innocence Project.



ARTIST SUPPORTERS

STELLAR STORY COMPANY

Stellar Story Company helps people and institutions deliver extraordinary stories and unforgettable events that lead to meaningful change. They combine their expertise in strategic communications, artistic storytelling, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to lead dynamic training and coaching programs.



CHERYL HAMILTON

Founder and Executive Director

Cheryl Hamilton has devoted her career to advancing more inclusive communities and storytelling. She is the founder and executive director of Stellar Story Company, which helps people and institutions develop extraordinary stories and unforgettable events for meaningful change. Hamilton directs curation and coaching for the national media

program *Stories from the Stage* and created *Suitcase Stories*, which features stories of refugee and immigrant life.



U-MELENI MHLABA-ADEBO

Story Coach

U-Meleni Mhlaba-Adebo is a Zimbabwean-American accomplished poet, author, performance artist, storyteller, and educator. Two of her stories about identity and race have been featured on *Stories from the Stage*. She has taught writing and wellness through the arts in schools, nonprofits, and community centers for over two decades and is an

instructor and story coach with Stellar Story Company.

ARC OF JUSTICE AWARD

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr., originally invoked by abolitionist Theodore Parker (Lexington, MA)

The **ARC OF JUSTICE AWARD** recognizes the special contributions of a community member who “bends the arc of the moral universe toward justice.” The principle behind the **ARC OF JUSTICE AWARD** is that the arc only bends toward justice when people pull it there; it does not happen on its own.

2023 is a year to acknowledge all that wrongfully convicted people must overcome to achieve their freedom and thrive in a new world. This year, in recognition of his detailed, thorough reporting that authentically captures the difficult and beautiful experiences of people directly impacted by a wrongful conviction, it is our distinct honor to present the **2023 ARC OF JUSTICE AWARD** to:

ANDREW RYAN

Andrew Ryan is a reporter on *The Boston Globe’s* Quick Strike investigative team.

Over the last few years, Andrew Ryan’s research and reporting has captured the journeys of several people attempting to overturn their convictions and about the community of wrongfully convicted people who support each other in freedom. From the releases of James Lucien and Shaun Jenkins in 2021, to the exoneration of Barry Kamara in 2023, Andrew Ryan has been present for significant milestones in this community,

even attending the 2022 Innocence Network Conference, along with exonerees and freed people. His reporting did not only cover individual cases, but he examined “the sins of Boston police past,” revealing that 80% of exonerations in Suffolk County in the last 3 decades have involved law enforcement misconduct.

Within this community, journalists can be seen with skepticism, having played a significant role in cementing biased, uncritical – and ultimately erroneous – narratives of people charged and convicted of crimes.

Through careful, detailed reporting, Andrew Ryan gained the trust of even the most skeptical, including beloved exoneree Ray Champagne, who sadly passed away shortly after being interviewed about his work with Sean Ellis and Victor Rosario to create the Exoneree Network.

Andrew Ryan’s writing of Ray’s obituary at such a difficult time was a salve for this community.

We are grateful for the honesty and integrity with which Andrew Ryan approaches his reporting and for shedding light on the injustices faced by wrongfully convicted people.

Photo credit: Pat Greenhouse / Boston Globe staff



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

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JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

Fighting even one wrongful conviction requires thousands of hours and thousands of dollars, but we think every second and every penny is worth it.

JOIN US:



Scan the QR code or click the button below to give.

DONATE NOW

FREEDOM IS WORTH IT.



Any gift you make towards this event goes toward our efforts to free people from prison and reunite them with their families. They have missed a million special moments, let's prevent them from missing any more. By working together, we are amplifying the voices of hundreds of wrongfully convicted individuals and giving them the support they need.

To make a gift from a donor advised fund, stock, or other securities, please contact Jordan Salvatoriello at jordan@newenglandinnocence.org.

MAKE IT MONTHLY!

Monthly donations are the best way to help us sustain our work the whole year through. Consider making a monthly gift by clicking **"Make It Monthly"** while making your online gift.

Pledge \$500 or more tonight or commit to a monthly donation of \$50 or more and be entered to win 1 of 2 prizes below!

A FRAMED PRINT



Prize 1: Win one of two framed prints by **A Revolutionary Press** who has collaborated with us to create beautiful prints inspired by the exoneree community.

A WINE TASTING & LUNCH

Prize 2: Win a wine tasting and lunch for six people at **Truro Vineyards!**



OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

SIGN UP FOR NEIP'S E-NEWSLETTER



Receive NEIP news and updates, hear exoneree stories, and learn more about how you can help correct and prevent wrongful convictions – right in your inbox!

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTER](#)

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL



JOIN THE RUNNING FOR INNOCENCE TEAM

November 5, 2023



This year, we are aiming to raise **\$10,000** to support the New England Innocence Project's Running for Innocence fund. The funds raised by this event will help fund the investigation and expert assistance needed to free people after a wrongful conviction. They will also help us build a supportive community for the wrongfully convicted by enabling recent exonerees to attend the 2024 Innocence Network conference in New Orleans!

[Click here for more information!](#)

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

ATTEND JAMMIN' FOR JUSTICE

October 19, 2023

In this third annual Jamming for Justice event, a very special line-up of local musicians joins forces to honor the memory of Massachusetts exoneree Ray Champagne and to support the work of the Exoneree Network, which Ray co-founded with fellow exonerees Sean Ellis and Victor Rosario.

JAMMIN' FOR JUSTICE



PHOTO CREDIT: BOSTON GLOBE

REMEMBERING RAY CHAMPAGNE



A CONCERT TO BENEFIT
THE EXONEREE NETWORK



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 6-9PM
THE BURREN, SOMERVILLE, MA
MUSICAL GUESTS: THE TALKING HEARTS,
FRIENDS OF RAY, AND THE "OG'S"

SCAN QR CODE FOR TICKETS

[CLICK HERE TO PURCHASE TICKETS](#)

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

JOIN US AT SWEENEY TODD

**A PORTION OF EACH TICKET
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MOONBOX PRODUCTIONS'
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Oct 13th - Nov 5th



BENEFITING
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Join us for Moonbox Productions' performance of Sweeney Todd, running from October 13 to November 5 at Arrow Street Arts in Cambridge. A portion of each ticket sale will go to NEIP. NEIP will participate in 'talk back' with the audience after the 3 p.m. matinee show on October 29, 2023.

[Click here to buy tickets.](#)

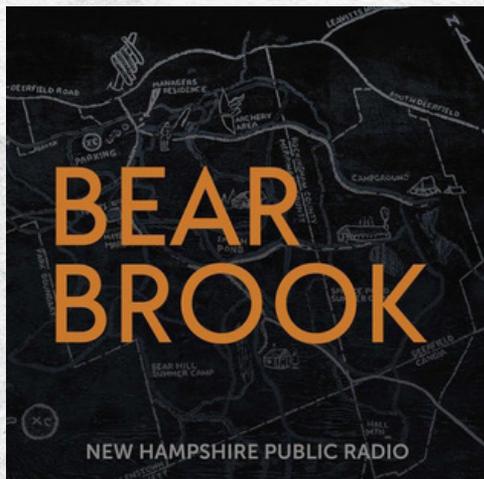
LISTEN TO SEASON 2 OF BEAR BROOK

Tune in to Season Two of New Hampshire Public Radio and Jason Moon's Bear Brook Podcast, "A True Crime Story," which tells the story of the murder of Sharon Johnson and how a false confession led to the wrongful conviction of our client, Jason Carroll.

[Click here to listen to Season 2 now.](#)



Thank you to our pro bono partner Foley Hoag for joining us in the fight to free Jason Carroll.



IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

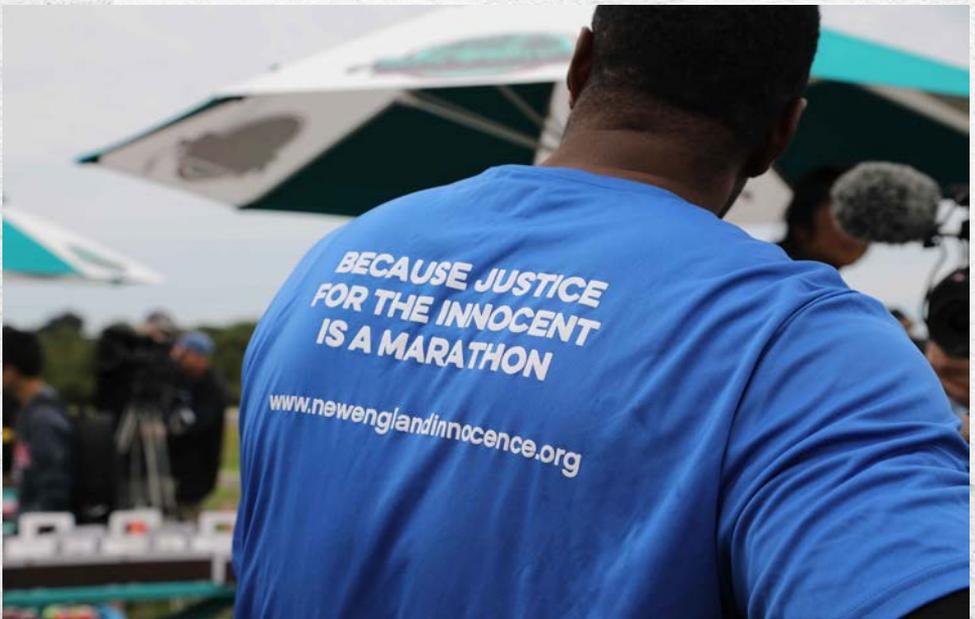
VOICES OF THE INNOCENT: AGAINST ALL ODDS was made possible by so many in our community.

We are grateful to all the Staff and Trustees of the New England Innocence Project, without whom we would not be able to carry out our important mission.

We are especially thankful to Jordan Salvatoriello for making this event possible, using her unique skills to amplify these important stories of wrongful conviction.

There are many people with whom we partner, and we could not possibly list all of them here. We deeply appreciate everyone who contributes to the freedom and support of those wrongfully convicted, including pro bono partners, co-counsel, amici, investigators, social workers, experts, volunteers, journalists, and donors.

In closing, we want to thank the families and loved ones of those wrongfully convicted who are still waiting for freedom. Thank you for trusting us to be in this fight with you.



FREEDOM PARTY

Saturday, June 10, 2023

3rd Annual Celebration of Community & Freedom at Kimball Farm



On June 10, we witnessed the true power of community at the 3rd annual Celebration of Freedom & Community, an event for exonerees and freed people, and their loved ones.



Photos by Thaddeus Miles

A SPECIAL MESSAGE

To Nancy Wagner from Michael Fee



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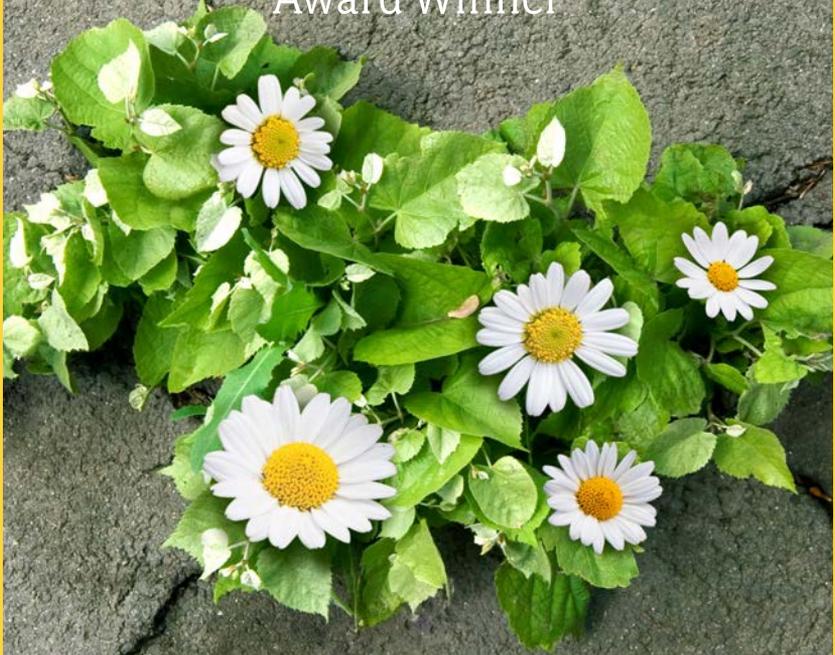
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ROPE & GRAY



CONGRATULATIONS Andrew Ryan

2023 Arc of Justice
Award Winner



Thank you
for your tremendous reporting, helping
The Voices of the Innocent Against All Odds



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Foley Hoag is once again delighted to partner with and support the **New England innocence Project** and its groundbreaking work to end wrongful convictions.

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GOODWIN

Goodwin is proud to sponsor New England Innocence Project's Voices of the Innocent event, in support of their mission to pursue justice for those wrongly convicted within the criminal legal system.

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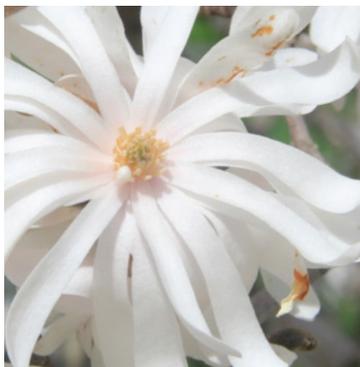
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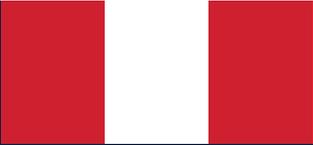
Latham applauds the New England Innocence Project for its commitment to correcting and preventing wrongful convictions and ensuring justice within the criminal legal system for innocent people throughout New England.

LW.com





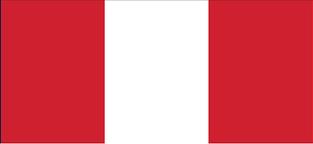
New England Biolabs is proud to support the
New England Innocence Project and Exonerree Network
for their unwavering dedication and commitment to justice



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FAMILY
AND**



**ARE PROUD
TO SUPPORT
VOICES OF THE
INNOCENT**





**ROPES & GRAY IS PROUD
TO SUPPORT THE**

**New England Innocence Project
and *Voices of the Innocent***

We congratulate this year's recipient of
the Arc of Justice Award:

Andrew Ryan

Reporter, *The Boston Globe*

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SEPTEMBER 22, 2023

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rights of everyone.

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**Our thanks to the
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Innocence Project
for helping move us
towards a more just world.**

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YOUR PASSION INSPIRES.

McDermott is proud to sponsor *Voices of the Innocent: Against All Odds* and efforts by the New England Innocence Project to fight for those who have been wrongfully convicted. Thank you for your inspiring contributions to the community and to the legal profession.

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the vital work of the

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Sidley is proud to collaborate with the

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in its fight to end wrongful convictions

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10 Years in
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and congratulates this year's
honoree, Andrew Ryan.

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**Congratulations to our friends at
The New England Innocence Project!
You inspire us!!**

Transformational Prison Project - on a mission to provide spaces where those who have been harmed and those who have done the harming can come together and engage in dialogue—to build understanding and empathy toward those who have been victims of violent crime.

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**Verrill proudly
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