

2021

# ANNUAL REPORT

TENNESSEE INNOCENCE PROJECT



(615) 581-7230

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a year's overview

# WHERE WE ARE NOW



If I had to use one word to describe 2021 for the Tennessee Innocence Project, it would be **people**. People were the heart and soul of the successes we experienced in 2021. After two years of consistent growth, it was exciting to feel the wheels of motion take flight – and it was all because of **people**.

**Shane, Joyce, and Charlie.** In August 2021, the Tennessee Innocence Project had its first exoneration in Nashville. Paul Shane Garrett was exonerated for a 2000 murder that he did not commit. With pro bono partner *Ritchie, Dillard, Johnson & Stovall*, TIP finally cleared Shane's name.

In December 2021, TIP presented new scientific evidence in the case of Joyce Watkins and Charlie Dunn, who were convicted of a 1987 murder and sexual assault in Nashville. Charlie passed away while incarcerated in 2015. Joyce was released on parole that same year, after serving 27 years in prison. TIP proved that the medical testimony given at trial about the timing of injury was scientifically inaccurate, excluding Joyce and Charlie as the perpetrators of the crime. Charges were dismissed against Joyce and Charlie in January 2022. You can read more about their cases on our website.

**Our Staff.** We cannot work these cases without **people** power, and in 2021, TIP expanded to add critical new staff positions. Adding a Director of Development allowed TIP to better connect with donors and supporters to keep them apprised of our important work. Adding Senior Legal Counsel allowed TIP to expedite and tackle its caseload. Our dedicated staff has grown from one person to six people in our first three years, and you can truly see the difference in our capacity.

**Our Board.** With the assistance and enthusiasm of a newly expanded Board of Directors, TIP assembled a long-term strategic plan in December 2021. TIP's newest Board members bring a diversity of experiences and voices that will help TIP reach more communities across Tennessee. The organization set long-term goals focusing on sustainable growth and financial impregnability, increasing legal representation, and expanding community engagement and education.

**Our Supporters.** I said it last year, and I'll say it again – without our donors, none of this is possible. TIP supporters showed up in 2021, allowing us to more than double revenue from 2020.

I struggle for the proper words to express what a privilege it is to work with all these incredible **people**. No word or phrase seems big enough to convey the full meaning. Our work is truly a team effort.

As we move into 2022, I am filled with optimism, and I look forward to sharing more successes with you.

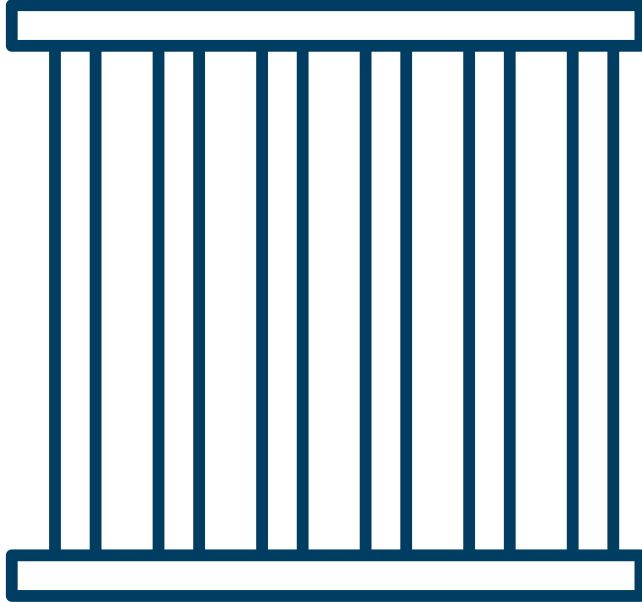
With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Van Dyke'.

Jessica Van Dyke  
Executive Director and Lead Counsel

# BY THE NUMBERS

---



**2,980**

people exonerated across  
the United States

**28**

people exonerated in  
Tennessee

**3**

people exonerated by the  
Tennessee Innocence  
Project

**47%**

of 2,900+ exonerates are  
Black people

Black exonerees spend

**45%**

longer wrongfully incarcerated  
than white exonerees  
(10.7 vs. 7.4 years)

**80%**

of criminal  
defendants cannot  
afford counsel at trial

---

## OUR WORK



1) Investigating and  
litigating wrongful  
conviction cases for  
those in Tennessee  
prisons to obtain  
exonerations



2) Training law students  
and attorneys about  
how to litigate these  
cases and how to  
prevent future wrongful  
convictions



3) Effectuating  
changes that facilitate  
the discovery of  
wrongful convictions  
and remedies to the  
wrongfully convicted

---

# GROWTH IN 2021

## FIRST EXONERATION

TIP & the Conviction Review Unit of the Davidson County DA's Office were successful in proving Mr. Garrett's innocence. In 2003, Mr. Garrett pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter to avoid a life sentence. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison and released in 2011. DNA evidence was critical in proving Mr. Garrett's innocence. In 2021, Mr. Garrett's wrongful conviction was overturned and the person whose DNA was found at the crime scene was arrested.



*Mr. Garrett with his family & TIP staff after his exoneration.*

## NEW OFFICE SPACE

In November 2021, we moved into a new office suite in Berry Hill. Our new office affords us the space to grow our team and focus on case work.

## TEAM EXPANSION

In the past year, we welcomed four new staff members - Jason Gichner, Senior Legal Counsel; Hayley Levy, Director of Development; Sarah Barrett, Intake Fellow; and Aubrey Garrido, Practice Management Coordinator.



*Danielle Irvine, Ashleigh Karnell, Amanda Knox, Alex Agee, and Margaret Dodson*

## CONTINUING THE FIGHT

Amanda Knox & Barry Scheck joined us for our annual fundraiser with 540+ guests (cocktail hour pictured on Pg.5).



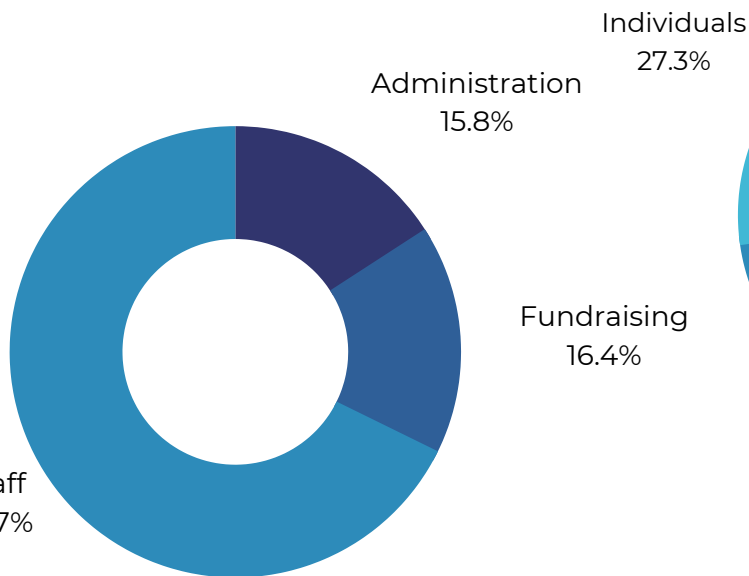
## SHINING LIGHT ON WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

Guest Anthony Ray Hinton shared his story of surviving 30 years on Alabama's death row with an audience of more than 500 in-person attendees as well as 300 virtual viewers.

# FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT



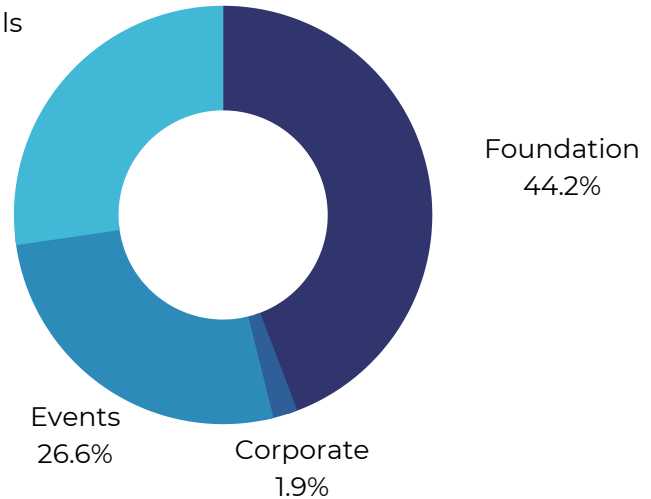
## EXPENSES



Administration	\$82,048
Fundraising	\$84,972
Programming & Staff	\$350,664

**\$517,684**

## REVENUE



Foundations	\$496,000
Corporate	\$21,227
Events	\$297,960
Individuals	\$306,231

**\$1,121,418**

# 2021 DONORS

Thank you to all of our 2021 fiscal year donors.  
Donors are listed in alphabetical order.

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## WHY I GIVE

"I first learned about the Tennessee Innocence Project in 2020 and was immediately blown away by its work. There have been less than 30 people exonerated in Tennessee. It means the world to me to be able to do my part, as a Tennessee Innocence Project donor, to help change that."

**Mike Edgeworth, Donor  
Nashville**

To make a financial contribution, please visit [www.tninnocence.org](http://www.tninnocence.org).

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## WHY I GIVE

“As a donor and current volunteer, I have seen the Tennessee Innocence Project’s tremendous growth since it first opened its doors. I believe it is uniquely positioned to tackle the issue of wrongful convictions in Tennessee, and I am honored to be a part of that.”

**Perian Strang, Donor  
Nashville**

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Mandy and Stephen Young

## WHY I GIVE

"I am proud to support the Tennessee Innocence Project, the only innocence organization in our state. No organization better exemplifies the fight for justice! They are changing the way Tennessee addresses wrongful convictions and the way our community understands issues in our criminal justice system."

**Roger Dickson, Advisory Council  
Chattanooga**

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## WHY I SERVE



**Ed Kendrick**  
**Board of Directors, Loudon**

"The Tennessee Innocence Project's far-reaching work is making such a difference in our State! I have had a very real and personal experience with wrongful convictions. I decided long ago that the rest of my life would be dedicated to active participation, whether it be through donations or hands on assistance, in seeking the freedom of those who are wrongfully convicted. When the opportunity came to be a part of something as honorable and prestigious as the Tennessee Innocence Project, I knew that this is where I was meant to be."

"I cannot think of any worse miscarriage of justice than to wrongly incarcerate a person. It's a true privilege to serve as a TIP advisory council member and witness the incredible work TIP is doing not only for the lives of the wrongly convicted, but for all of us who care deeply about justice in our state."

**Amy Mohan**  
**Advisory Council, Nashville**



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As of Feb. 2022

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## INTAKE

# 125

In 2021, TIP received and investigated 125 new applications for representation.

## TN COUNTIES

# 41

TIP received applications regarding cases in 41 of Tennessee's 95 counties.

## PRO BONO HOURS

# 1,600

TIP's incredible attorney partners contributed 1,600 pro bono hours in 2021.

## EXONERATIONS

# 3

Since our formation in 2019, we have achieved 3 exonerations to date.



**THE TENNESSEE INNOCENCE PROJECT**  
EXONERATING THE WRONGFULLY CONVICTED



700 Craighead Street, Suite 300  
Nashville, Tennessee 37204



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