

TENNESSEE INNOCENCE PROJECT

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



**TRANSFORMING
TENNESSEE**



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Dear friends and supporters,

In 2019, I left private practice to help launch the Tennessee Innocence Project as a statewide law firm. I was the first and only employee. As we enter our 5th year as the only in-state innocence organization, I see the impact and reach we have already had – and the tremendous growth that is on the horizon. We are helping transform Tennessee.

Thanks to your generosity and support, 2022 was a testament to that transformation. We received more than 700 inquiries since opening our doors in 2019, tripled our staff and budget, and achieved four exonerations to date. Our team includes 19 Board Members, 19 Advisory Council Members, and countless volunteers and pro bono legal professionals from across the state.

In 2022, we achieved three exonerations. Our 2022 exonerees, Joyce Watkins, Charlie Dunn, and Claude Garrett, collectively spent 84 years wrongfully incarcerated. Since her exoneration, Ms. Watkins has joined us at countless speaking engagements across the state – from the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law to The Temple Congregation Ohabai Sholom in Nashville – raising awareness about wrongful convictions. Our work has received national attention with coverage of Ms. Watkins' and Mr. Dunn's exoneration in *People Magazine*, *CNN*, and *CBS Sunday Morning* as well as local coverage by *The Tennessean*, *Main Street Nashville*, *The Nashville Ledger*, *Nashville Scene*, and others. Through this coverage, communities are educated about the complexity of wrongful convictions and the realities of the justice system!



We are no longer a start-up non-profit organization. Today, we lead efforts across the state around wrongful convictions, building collaborations with legal professionals and District Attorney's Offices, establishing new Tennessee case law through our litigation, and giving voices to individuals who have been unheard for decades. Moving forward, we are developing ways to support the mental health needs of our clients and exonerees. Throughout these transformative efforts, we fight every day for our clients – investigating innocence claims and pushing our caseload forward.

The transformation of justice work in Tennessee is not possible without your support. We hope you will join us on our continued journey to transform Tennessee.

With gratitude,

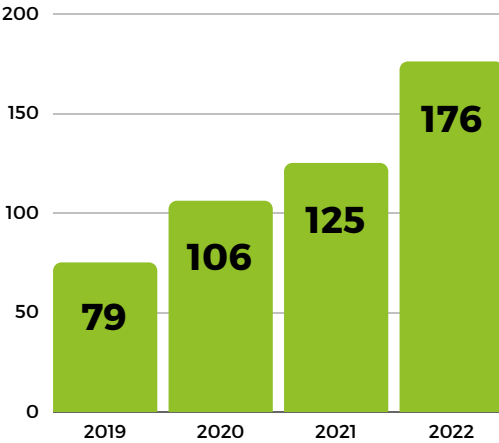
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Van Dyke'.

Jessica Van Dyke
Executive Director and Lead Counsel

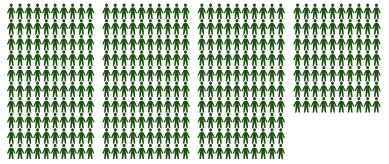
FACTS & FIGURES

Legal Work

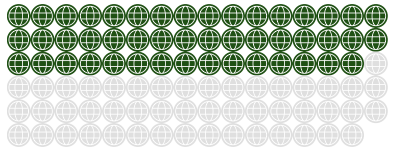
Applications Since Opening



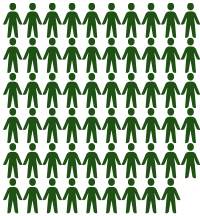
370 Inquiries in 2022



47 TN Counties (of 95) Represented



59 Cases on Waitlist



12 Active Cases



Top Counties

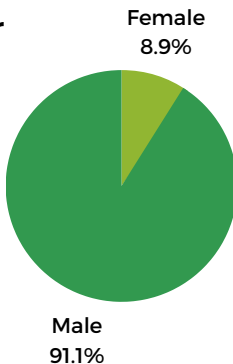
1. Shelby
2. Davidson
3. Knox
4. Hamilton, Maury, & Montgomery (tied)

3 Exonerations

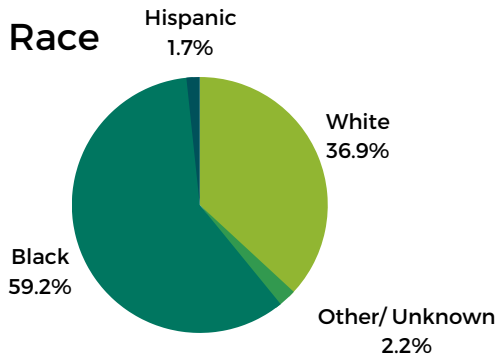


Client Demographics

Gender



Race



FACES OF SUCCESS

In 2022, TIP successfully exonerated three individuals. Collectively, these individuals served 84 years wrongfully imprisoned. In 2021, TIP saw its first ever exoneration, bringing the total number of years lost to TIP exonerees to 95 years. Along with their families and loved ones, these individuals have endured what no one should have to endure. We encourage you to learn their names and help us share their stories.



CHARLIE DUNN*

EXONERATED: JAN. 2022

YEARS INCARCERATED: 27

*DIED IN PRISON 2015



CLAUDE GARRETT

EXONERATED: MAY 2022

YEARS INCARCERATED: 30

In 1992, Claude Garrett was convicted of the murder of his fiancé, Lori Lance, after a horrific house fire took place in their Old Hickory, Tennessee home. Mr. Garrett sustained injuries from the fire, but Ms. Lance sadly succumbed to smoke inhalation. In 2022, TIP and the Federal Defenders successfully overturned his wrongful conviction and were able to greet Mr. Garrett as he walked out of prison for the first time in 30 years.





JOYCE WATKINS

EXONERATED: JAN. 2022

YEARS INCARCERATED: 27

Joyce Watkins and Charlie Dunn were wrongfully convicted in 1988 of the murder and sexual assault of Ms. Watkins' great niece. In 2015, Ms. Watkins was released on parole and placed on the sex offender registry. Unfortunately, Mr. Dunn never experienced freedom, as he passed away in 2015 while incarcerated. In 2022, 74-year-old Ms. Watkins was exonerated after spending more than 27 years in prison for a crime she did not commit; Mr. Dunn was exonerated posthumously. She is the first Black woman to ever be exonerated in the state and only the third woman in Tennessee history. Now, she serves as a spokesperson and activist, bringing awareness to wrongful convictions.

"First and foremost, the Tennessee Innocence Project is a law firm. Wrongful conviction work is complicated and challenging. Every case requires a detailed fact investigation, expert consultation, and time consuming litigation. It takes a team of talented attorneys and dedicated support staff to achieve exonerations. We take this job home at night. We think about our cases on the weekend. Our clients are innocent people, behind bars, for things they did not do. We recognize the responsibility that comes with this representation and know how lucky we are to get to do this job."



JASON GICHNER
SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL

GROWING OUR REACH



Senior Legal Counsel Jason Gichner leads a CLE at Polsinelli.

EDUCATING ATTORNEYS

TIP taught four Continuing Legal Education (CLE) courses, training attorneys about how to litigate innocence cases and how to prevent future wrongful convictions. In 2022, 85 attorneys were trained across the state.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

From Sunday school classes to rotary clubs and corporate lunch & learns, TIP led 32 presentations through Tennessee in 2022, reaching more than 1,600 attendees, to educate the public on wrongful convictions and grow awareness about our mission.



Executive Director Jessica Van Dyke speaks at BMG, our first music industry partner.



Above left: Director of Development Hayley Levy tables with Board Member & Vanderbilt Professor, Dr. Rosevelt Noble, at the Social Justice Fair at the Vanderbilt Black Cultural Center.

Above right: Practice Management Coordinator Aubrey Garrido & Legal Intern Madison Lowery table at American singer-songwriter Langhorne Slim's concert at the Basement East in Nashville, TN.





NASHVILLE INSPIRED BY INNOCENCE: STORIES & SONGWRITING

With more than 550 attendees, our 2022 Nashville fundraiser was our largest to date! It featured keynote speaker Dr. Roger Mitchell, and stories and songwriting on our most recent exonerations written and performed by Jon Mabe, Zac Maloy, and Marcus Hummon.

MEMPHIS SHINING LIGHT ON WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS WITH DEATH ROW EXONEREE ANTHONY RAY HINTON

TIP hosted its first Memphis event at the National Civil Rights Museum featuring exoneree Anthony Ray Hinton, who joined us in 2021 in Nashville as well.

CREATING AWARENESS



922
Event
Attendees

25,285
Website
Visits

330+
New Facebook
Likes

95,260+
Twitter
Impressions

16,000+
Instagram
Accounts Reached

2022 DONORS

WHY I GIVE

"I support TIP because of my experience with my friend, Michael Sample. Michael has spent 41 years on death row for a crime he did not commit. If TIP was around in 1981, a professional investigation and representation would have proved his innocence. I don't want that to happen to anyone in Tennessee again, which is why I believe strongly in TIP's mission."

Joe Williams, Donor Nashville

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Thank you to all of our 2022 fiscal year donors. Donors are listed in alphabetical order.

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"TIP does more than pursue justice — they ultimately restore families and communities. As a current law student and person of faith, I couldn't be more passionate about their mission."

**Kalyn Sisco, Donor
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"It would be devastating to be wrongly convicted of a felony followed by years of punishment. These wrongs must be corrected for our democracy and society to survive."

Elaine Hackerman, Nashville
First Planned Giving Donor

If you'd like to find out more about leaving a legacy gift, please email Hayley@TNInnocence.org.

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"The Kharis Foundation is a proud supporter of the Tennessee Innocence Project because nobody's life should be taken away from them because of a wrongful conviction. It is sad that this work is necessary, but it is gratifying to know that we can help reverse some of the damage that is done when our systems fail."

**Melinda Sanders,
Kharis Foundation, Executive Director**

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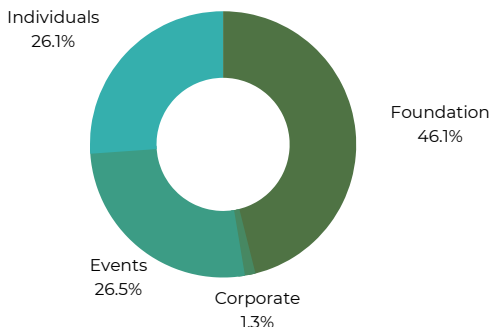
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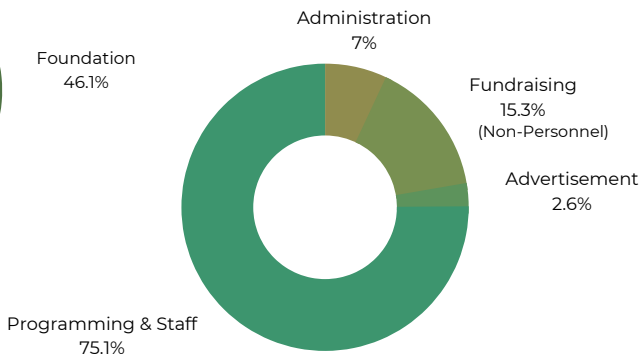
2,723 HOURS

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

FY22 REVENUE



FY22 EXPENSES



EXPENSES

	FY21	FY22
Administration	\$79,711	\$59,188
Advertisement	\$2,337	\$22,127
Fundraising	\$84,972	\$130,138
Programming & Staff	\$350,664	\$638,044
	\$517,684	\$849,497

REVENUE

	FY21	FY22
Foundations	\$496,000	\$629,388
Corporate	\$21,227	\$17,540
Events	\$297,960	\$362,131
Individuals	\$306,231	\$356,778
	\$1,121,418	\$1,365,837

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WHY I SERVE



"I serve because wrongful convictions, specifically those of the truly innocent, are not just injustices placed upon our clients. They are injustices placed upon them, their families, and our society. They are preventable diseases of our criminal justice system."

Marc Caudel
Advisory Council & Private Investigator
Memphis

"After spending nearly 30 years in the law, serving as an attorney and a federal judge, I appreciate the work that our attorneys at the Tennessee Innocence Project are doing. This work is difficult and the odds are sometimes long, and I am proud to support them in this fight for justice."

Judge Kevin Sharp
Advisory Council
Nashville



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As of Feb. 2023

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**They locked the door behind me.
Nobody called my name.
They called me by a number,
Oh, but I wasn't gonna break.**

**So, I stared at the ceiling,
Night after night.
I never stopped believing;
I never gave up the fight.**

**When you get knocked down
You gotta get back up,
Or you're never gonna get where you're going.**

**If I lean on God, my hope & my faith
I know that I'm walking out of this place
Unbroken.**

- Jon Mabe, Zac Maloy, Marcus Hummon

Song lyrics based on the story of TIP Exoneree, Joyce Watkins



THE TENNESSEE INNOCENCE PROJECT
EXONERATING THE WRONGFULLY CONVICTED



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