2015 has been an extraordinary year at the Northern California Innocence Project, filled with growth, success and some heartbreak. Throughout it all, the NCIP team made tremendous progress on our mission to promote a fair, effective and compassionate criminal justice system and protect the rights of the innocent. Here are some highlights:

NCIP Appoints New Executive Director

In November, **Hadar Harris was appointed as the new Executive Director of NCIP.** A California native, Harris comes to NCIP with a long history of addressing criminal justice reform issues through the broad lens of civil and political rights and racial justice issues. She joins NCIP after serving 13 years as executive director of the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of Law in Washington, D.C. Harris holds a BA in Political Science from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, and a Juris Doctor from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Larry Pohlschneider Exonerated

On October 14, **NCIP client Larry Pohlschneider walked out of prison a free man after serving 15 years wrongly incarcerated.** Thanks to evidence presented by NCIP Assistant Legal Director Maitreya Badami, Pohlschneider’s lead attorney, and pro bono attorney Thom Seaton, the Tehama County District Attorney agreed that his conviction should be vacated and charges dismissed due to the ineffective assistance of his trial counsel.

NCIP’s investigation revealed that Pohlschneider’s trial counsel failed to challenge critical testimony by the prosecution’s medical expert—testimony that was scientifically inaccurate and upon which Pohlschneider’s conviction was based. NCIP clinic students participated in the investigation, helped to interview witnesses, drafted declarations, and assisted in preparing the legal pleadings that resulted in his exoneration.

Since his release, Pohlschneider has reunited with his overjoyed mother and children, and is now living in Northern California where he is adjusting to his newfound freedom.

NCIP Celebrates Two Legislative Victories

NCIP continued its legislative success in 2015, with two bills that were signed into law by Governor Brown. The first bill, **SB 635, authored by Senator Nielsen and co-authored by Senator Leno, increases exoneree compensation from $100 to $140 for each day of wrongful imprisonment.** The increase, the first since 2000, brings compensation rates up to adjust for inflation and to meet current standards of living, to better assist exonerees in rebuilding their lives after they are released from prison. The bill also provides exonerees with compensation for all the time they spent in custody for the wrongful conviction, including jail time.

The second bill, **AB 672, was authored by Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer and was named Obie’s Law after NCIP exoneree Obie Anthony.** This bill requires the California Department of Corrections to help exonerees obtain identification cards and transitional services after their release from prison.

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NCIP Hosts Groundbreaking Symposium on Conviction Review Programs

On September 25, approximately 300 people—including prosecutors, defense attorneys, exonerees and judges—attended NCIP’s “In the Interest of Justice: Conviction Review Programs” symposium to share information about how jurisdictions around the country conduct conviction review and to learn how to implement successful conviction review programs. As a result of NCIP’s symposium, several attendees reported that they will be implementing conviction review programs in their jurisdictions, using best practices information they gained at the symposium.

Exoneree Updates

Governor Brown approved compensation to NCIP exoneree Ronald Ross for his 7 years of wrongful imprisonment. Ross received $100 per day of wrongful imprisonment.

NCIP exoneree Obie Anthony received $8.3 million in a settlement with the city of Los Angeles related to his wrongful conviction. He also won his state compensation claim of $100 per day of his wrongful imprisonment.

NCIP exonerees continued to testify before the California legislature in 2015. Maurice Caldwell and Obie Anthony testified in support of bills to provide exonerees with critical post-release resources and to improve California’s legal standard for determining factual innocence.

An Innocent Client’s Life Ends Before Vindication

While awaiting justice in his case, NCIP client David Losoya succumbed to Valley Fever and died in prison. Losoya was wrongfully convicted of murder in 1978 based on a faulty eyewitness identification and spent 37 years in prison—mostly in solitary confinement—before his death on June 23, 2015.

Within months of his conviction authorities had reliable evidence proving that Losoya was innocent of the crime, but no action was taken to rectify the wrongful conviction. In 2014 and 2015, NCIP uncovered compelling evidence of Losoya’s innocence. We were weeks away from filing a petition for writ of habeas corpus challenging his conviction when we were notified that he had died.

While we mourn Losoya’s tragic death, we continue to seek his vindication through a posthumous pardon by the governor and continue to support policy efforts to improve eyewitness identification practices, reduce the use of solitary confinement and implement effective conviction review programs.

Your Support Is Critical

Your support throughout the tragedies and the triumphs of this work is critical—together we are freeing the innocent and reforming policies to help prevent wrongful convictions. But we rely on charitable contributions to advance this work. Please make your year-end gift to NCIP today, via the enclosed envelope or online at www.ncip.scu.edu. Stand with NCIP and let justice prevail.