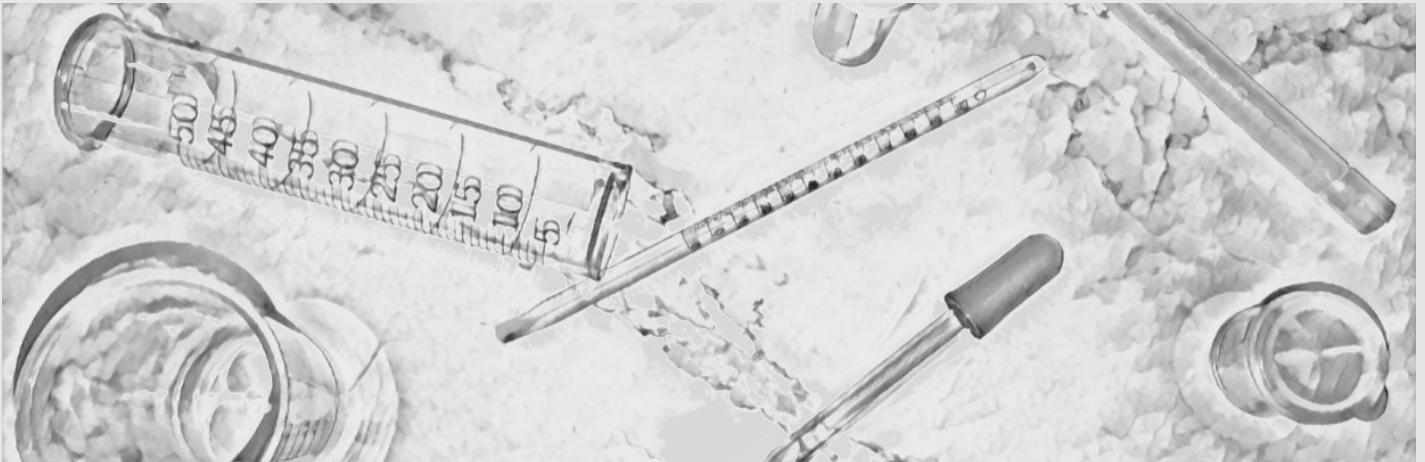


INTEGRITY

The Center for Integrity in Forensic Sciences Newsletter



Cases

CIFS clients Amanda Brumfield and Stephanie Spurgeon were released from prison in 2020.

Amanda was released after she agreed to abandon her motion for a new trial in exchange for her immediate release. Amanda is now able to spend time with her family, from whom she was separated for her 9 years in prison. She is no longer incarcerated, but she was not cleared of the charges against her. This means that she is deprived of some of her rights, like voting and serving on juries. Prosecutors continue to convict people of crimes they did not commit through plea bargains and other agreements. This is practice that limits the lives of too many innocent people.

Stephanie Spurgeon was released after a judge granted her a new trial. We are all awaiting her new trial date, which has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are ready to fight the faulty forensic science that wrongfully put her in prison.

Science in the News

Texas- In 2009, Briana Maldonado was found murdered in her home. Neighbor Areli Escobar was convicted of aggravated sexual assault and capital murder in 2011 and sentenced to death. After many years of appeals, Escobar was granted a new trial. *Continued on page 2*

IN THIS ISSUE

-SCIENCE IN THE NEWS

-CASES

-AMICUS BRIEFS

-PEOPLE

-FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Every donation brings us that much closer to a fair legal system.

DONATE



Photo by Martin R. Smith

People

Madeline Weeden joined CIFS full-time as our Communications and Development Specialist in 2021. Madeline has been a part of the CIFS team since she was in college, first as an intern and then as a part-time staffer. Madeline says, "as we move forward in 2021 and bring you regular, quarterly, newsletters, I hope to create new and exciting content for you. I have been fascinated with the criminal justice system most of my life and want to make the issues within it, more known. I believe it is the first step in fixing a broken system."

Science in the News

Continued from page 1

The case against him was based on DNA evidence from blood on his shoes and shirt. There were many concerns about the lab in Dallas that processed evidence including a staff member that used faulty math in determining results. This same staffer testified in Escobar's trial. Eventually a state audit led to the closing of the lab in 2016, and later reopening under state supervision. New science showed that the DNA used to convict Escobar was unreliable.

The DNA evidence in a trial today would have been labeled "inconclusive". Escobar has always said that the blood on his shoes and shirt were from muggings that happened the same night as the murder. He has always proclaimed his innocence. DNA is often considered the "gold standard" of forensic science, but it simply is not reliable when it is used incorrectly. A case like this puts unreliable forensic science in a nationwide spotlight.

More on Areli Escobar's case can be found at TheAppeal.org

Amicus Briefs

CIFS filed an amicus brief on behalf of Clarence Jones in the Maryland Court of Special Appeals in 2020. This brief focused on the change in science since Clarence's first trial. Clarence Jones was wrongfully convicted of murdering his infant son after doctors diagnosed Shaken Baby Syndrome. Based on changes in scientific understanding since the trial and new information about his son's serious illness, Clarence's conviction has since been overturned and his case remanded for a new trial.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to CIFS's first newsletter. We're here to share our progress with you, but, more importantly, we're here to listen and learn. You, our partners, are critical to the success of this new organization as we fight for systemic change in the criminal legal system

and work to ensure fair trials for all. We know that the kind of transformational change we seek can take years, even decades, and we look forward to working with you on this long-term project. If you'd like to be in touch, please email us at info@cifsjustice.org.