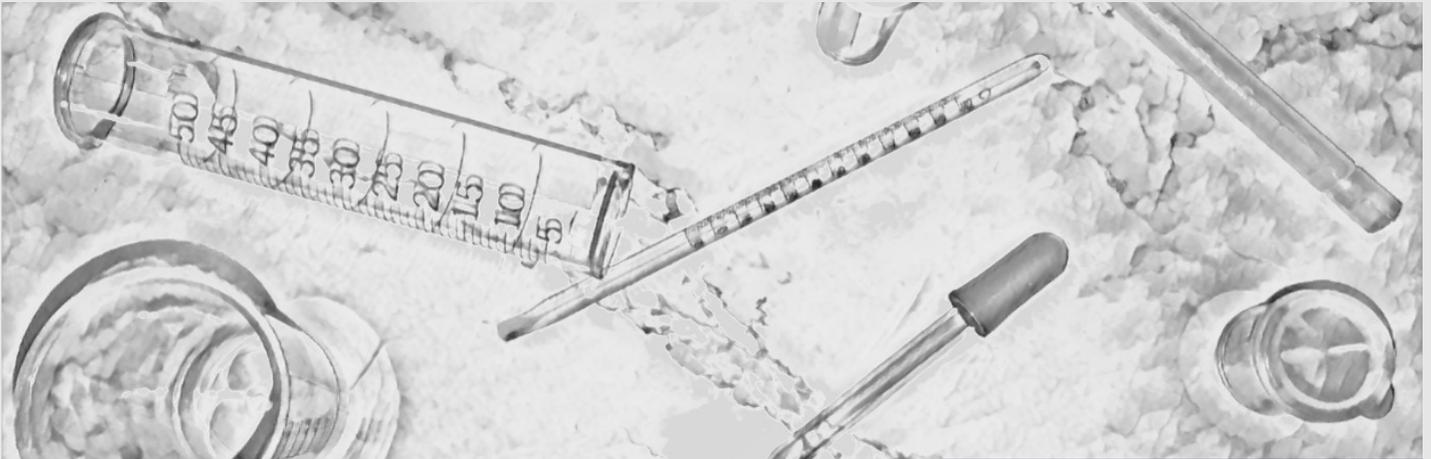


INTEGRITY

The Center for Integrity in Forensic Sciences Newsletter



Cases

You can help save Melissa Lucio!

Melissa was sentenced to death in TX for the murder of her 2-year-old daughter. Melissa is fighting for her innocence as her execution date--April 27th, 2022--approaches. If you live in Texas, call D.A Saenz and urge him to withdraw the execution date: 956-300-3881.

Learn more at <https://innocenceproject.org>

Amicus Briefs

Since January, CIFS has filed three amicus briefs as a neutral third party in cases where alleged child abuse/shaken baby syndrome led to wrongful convictions.

Robert Roberson was originally convicted of shaking his two-year-old daughter to death and sentenced to death in 2003 in Texas.

Recent scientific and medical research has established that the traditional medical findings associated with the

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EVERY DONATION BRINGS US THAT MUCH CLOSER TO A FAIR LEGAL SYSTEM.

DONATE

SBS/AHT hypothesis are inadequate to reliably diagnose SBS/AHT without further corroborating evidence.

Dr. Roland Auer concluded that undiagnosed pneumonia, with the layer of drugs suppressing his daughter's respiration, caused her to stop breathing and experience cardiac arrest, not abuse.



Robert Roberson at his hearing in January, photo by Stuart Whitaker

Our second amicus brief was in partnership with the Innocence Network. **Tasha Shelby** has been incarcerated for over 19 years for the death of her fiancé's son, a crime that the medical examiner in this case now believes did not occur at all. In 2015 this medical examiner changed the toddler's death certificate, marking it an accidental death after he found evidence of a seizure disorder. We are asking for a new trial for Tasha as the triad of symptoms once linked to Shaken Baby Syndrome is no longer diagnostic of abuse and can be caused by numerous medical conditions.

On a night in 1997 when this accident occurred, Tasha heard a thump and found the toddler on the floor, having a seizure. He was rushed to the emergency room but he died the next morning.



Tasha Shelby

Tasha was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole in Mississippi prison.

Chazlee Lemons was convicted of shaking her daughter to death in 2005 and sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. During an intense interrogation, Chazlee made inculpatory statements about the death, as traumatized and grief-stricken people sometimes do, and we are concerned about the way her statements were interpreted, particularly in the face of contradictory forensic evidence. Because the opinions at trial were subjective, they are vulnerable to bias. This is a critical and ongoing issue in our work.



People

After a nationwide search, we are excited to announce we have hired for the role of "Forensic Science Researcher/Analyst" as part of our new Expert Development Program. This program seeks to improve the quality and availability of objective experts; criminal defendants must have access to competent, reliable, and persuasive expert witness assistance in order to receive just outcomes. We'd like to welcome Kristen McCowan to our team! Kristen is a student at Arizona State University where she is finishing up her PhD in Psychology and Law.

Kristen has spent the last several years working on research in the legal psychology field and the limitations and misconceptions surrounding forensic sciences in courtrooms. She deeply believes in the necessity of sharing research with the public and officials to help shed light on the limitations of our legal system in order to promote awareness and reform.

Kristen's previous work at ASU has included jurors' comprehension of forensic evidence, whether jurors' can discern strong vs. weak forensic science, and the impact of forensic evidence in deliberations.

Welcome to CIFS, Kristen!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The first quarter of the year allows us to reflect on the ways in which marginalized identities are affected by the criminal legal system in general and faulty forensic science in particular. Black History Month affords us time to learn about Black luminaries in the criminal legal space in the past as well as moving forward. There is no question that people of color, especially Black people, have been particularly mistreated by the system, and those at the intersection of marginalized identities, like those who are Black and also women, LGBTQ, or disabled see this harm compounded.

As we move into March, Women's History Month brings these harms into focus. About 70% of female exonerates were convicted of crimes that did not occur. Many of these cases involved children or others in the exoneree's care, illustrating how being in a caregiving role can be weaponized. Because forensic science testimony can be so subjective, biases about these identities can have an outsized effect. Bad forensic science isn't always recognized as a women's issue, but it is one. I hope you'll stand with us as we continue to address intersectional harm in the system.