

## **Interim Report, June 2019**

**Nick O'Connor**

### **Korey Wise Innocence Project**

I have spent the past five weeks working at the Korey Wise Innocence Project in Boulder, Colorado. Despite the unique times, I have been able to assume significant responsibilities within the office. This is in part because of the wide range of services provided by the Innocence Project. I have been fortunate enough to participate in a wide range of areas and have gotten experience in many different roles. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and the support from the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation.

To begin the summer, we started with a team-wide training where we discussed the primary roles and procedures of the office, as well as where the interns would fall within the operations. We also learned about inconsistencies within the criminal justice system and how the Innocence Project works to combat these. Further, we discussed some of our strategy for the current work being taken on by the office. At the end of the training, we were informed of our roles for the summer.

My daily responsibilities often vary based on what is needed that day, but I typically spend my day conducting legal research, searching for cases that are similar to the ones that we have taken on, and compiling and coding the database using my research skills. Given my educational background, I am well equipped to conduct in-depth research into cases, testimony, and procedures. As a result, I have been tasked with researching old cases, and scientific evidence used to try and find any information that can be used in court in the current cases. As the research progresses I present my findings to the legal team that will be taking the case to court. Through this, I have been incorporated into the legal team's meetings on strategy, motions, and case specifics. This has allowed me to see how cases progress from being taken on, to being taken to court.

The research allowed me to make connections with law students and lawyers on the team, and gave me a chance to showcase my abilities. This had led to many additional opportunities with these members of the office. One particularly interesting task has been to compile a list of every state's statutes on post-conviction proceedings. After compiling all of the statutes, I was able to help one of the law students with his research into the statutes. Finally, I have been

reading and analyzing summaries from past exonerations, and doing write-ups on the ones that may be useful to us.

My passions have grown immensely during this short period. Each of my roles has allowed me to see the direct impact that every day of work will have on releasing innocent people from prison. Seeing the importance of each duty encourages me to take increased pride in the work that I do. This internship has been exactly as I had hoped and has already opened my eyes to so many opportunities for my future - opportunities to use my education and experience to help so many people who have been wronged by the criminal justice system. I hope to continue the fight for justice in the future, and I am excited to increase my role throughout the rest of the summer.

I am so grateful to the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation for its support, this would not have been possible without them.