

## **Final Report, August 2020**

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### **The Korey Wise Innocence Project at the University of Colorado Law School**

My summer internship has been nothing short of transformative. With the current atmosphere surrounding criminal justice reform, my work at the Innocence Project took on a deeper meaning to me. During the first half of the summer, I spent a lot of time getting to know the inner workings of the office, and I completed tasks for multiple different projects. However, during the second half of the summer, I began to take on larger responsibilities, including my own projects.

I have continued doing my research and have completed the creation of the database that will help the office connect old exonerations with similar cases. Completing this project not only built a database for the office, but it also provided me with a wealth of information that I have been able to use in other aspects of my job. For instance, in completing this project, I read the stories of over 600 exonerees, including the details of the crime, and how they were eventually exonerated. Later, when working on other projects, I could give advice for how the office could approach a certain case or what specific questions to ask. This all came from the information that I gathered in my research.

This led to me getting more significant roles, and even taking on my own projects. Toward the end of the summer, I began reading applications that were sent to the office. After we received an application that we determined warranted a more in-depth look, I would take the case on for a review. From there I read the application, researched the case, and worked with a law student to research the appeals and motions. Ultimately, the law student and I worked together to write a report to our boss, with our final recommendation. This process was so influential for so many reasons. First and foremost, getting to conduct the preliminary investigation into the case was an extraordinary way to participate in the primary mission of the Innocence Project of first level assistance to those wrongfully convicted. This was also a way for me to experience a case from the very beginning, as I already had experienced the cases in later stages, and it gave me a holistic look at the innocence process.

When I accepted this position, I knew that I would learn much from my boss and the law students, and I knew that I would learn a new side of the criminal justice system. While I was

right about this, I woefully underestimated the extent to which I would learn. Almost every day, I was emailing my boss questions and learning new information about the Innocence Project, the exoneration process, and the criminal justice system as a whole.

Back in March, I also *thought* that I knew that I did not want to have anything to do with criminal law in my future. This internship proved me wrong about that. After seeing the good that the office does, as well as the intricacies that make every case unique and challenging, I believe that my future holds some sort of innocence work.

I would like to thank the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation for this experience. Without their generosity and assistance, I would not have been able to devote the time and energy to this project, and I would not have received the same transformative experience without them. There are few experiences that come to mind that have been as influential as this summer at the Korey Wise Innocence Project, and it would not have been possible without the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation. Not only did the foundation give me a chance to pursue a fantastic internship for the summer and help many people, but it gave me the opportunity to learn more about myself and more about my future in law.