

Anthony Graves

August of 1992- one week shy of my 27th birthday. I woke up to a knock on my mother's apartment door. It was the neighbor coming to tell me that the Police were looking for me. Why? I decided to go outside and look for the Police.

An officer pulled up in his patrol car, I stopped to wait on him to approach me. I didn't know that this encounter with the officer would change my life forever. I had no idea I was about to spend the next eighteen and a half years behind bars, including twelve and a half on Texas death row totally innocent.

I cooperated with law enforcement 110 percent, so sure was I that the whole thing was some crazy mistake. They told me that another man had named me as his accomplice. That's it. He said my name. There was no other evidence to support his claim. I had a full alibi- I was home with my then girlfriend that night long before the hours of the murders. There was no physical evidence to connect me to it(fingerprints, footprints, blood on my clothes or traces of embers) No skin cells or hair follicles from the victims. No eyewitnesses, except the man who said my name, and he had burns on his body when he showed up to the victims funeral.

I witnessed the nearly unchecked power of the district attorney's office and how one individual can have so much impact on our lives. I witness how law enforcement can get tunnel-vision once they have a murder suspect in custody.

I witness the role of the media in shaping opinions around cases before trial. I also witnessed how judges give wide leeway to prosecutors instead of heeding the actual facts or some notion of justice for all. All of these things eventually led to my wrongful conviction. our criminal justice system is deeply biased and careless.

Over the next 12 ½ years, I witnessed over 400 men being murdered at the hands of the state. I knew that I was innocent and therefore, I remained hopeful.

I was convicted after a sham of a trial replete with mistakes, bias and tunnel-vision. Whatever was said by law enforcement was gospel. Lack of facts to support their conclusion was tolerated. Exculpatory evidence was hidden from me and my lawyers. I was expendable. After my trial I was sentenced to die and sent to death row.

My execution date was set twice. I remember the first time I was told the state had set an execution date. I was escorted to the Major's office

in handcuffs. He sat me down and told me that the state had set a date for my execution.

My conviction was overturned, after a wonderful journalist worked hard to uncover all the errors in my case, and the bias that accompanied it. I hope that this committee will find a way to address the issues that are plaguing our criminal justice system and fix it to make it better for us all, because every person matters, every effort makes a difference. Believe me, I know.

Thank you.