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INNOCENT MAN SUES CHICAGO COPS, CITY OF CHICAGO AFTER SERVING 20 YEARS IN PRISON FOR MURDER HE DID NOT COMMIT

***Authorities Fabricated Evidence, Falsified Reports, and
Manipulated 12-Year-Old Witness to Falsely Identify Jacques
Rivera as Assailant***

CHICAGO – Jacques Rivera, a 47-year-old Chicago resident who spent more than 20 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, filed a lawsuit today against the City of Chicago and Chicago police officers who conspired to convict him for first-degree murder despite the lack of any evidence.

According to the lawsuit filed in federal district court in Chicago, former police detectives from Area Five manipulated a 12-year-old witness, Orlando Lopez, into identifying Rivera as the murderer of Felix Valentin.

Throughout his 20-year incarceration, Rivera tirelessly maintained his innocence. In 2010, the Northwestern University Center on Wrongful Convictions filed a petition on Rivera's behalf, alleging his innocence. An evidentiary hearing was held, and Orlando Lopez testified that he had falsely identified Rivera more than 20 years before. On September 13, 2011, the Cook County Circuit Court overturned Rivera's conviction, and the Cook County State's Attorney's Office dismissed charges against Rivera.

The suit seeks damages for the trauma inflicted on Rivera as a result of these acts, which violated his civil rights, stole his freedom, and deprived him of more than 20 years with his wife and three children.

"Jacques Rivera has suffered a grave injustice at the hands of Chicago police who manipulated a young boy, falsified evidence and exhibited utter indifference to the truth," said Locke Bowman, one of Rivera's attorneys and director of the Roderick MacArthur Justice Center. "This

is a pattern within the Chicago Police Department. Since 1986, there are at least 67 documented cases in which the CPD's actions led to wrongful convictions. The Police Department has never investigated any of these cases or disciplined an officer despite clear, egregious misconduct in many of these cases. That's simply unacceptable."

According to the suit, on August 27, 1988, 16-year-old Felix Valentin was shot while sitting in a car on the West Side of Chicago. Before Valentin died from his injuries, he told police that his assailant was one Jose Rodriguez. During the same time period, detectives interviewed 12-year-old Lopez, the only witness to the crime, and used suggestive tactics to manipulate him into identifying Rivera as the assailant. The police officers then arrested Rivera despite the absence of any physical or other evidence linking him to the crime.

According to the suit, during the first line-up that included Rivera, Lopez was unable to identify anyone as Valentin's assailant. No police record was made of this failed line up. Instead, detectives falsified records to show that Lopez had not viewed the line up.

After this first line-up, Lopez encountered the actual shooter in his neighborhood, according to the suit. Prior to a second line-up two weeks later, Lopez told police he had seen the assailant. Police ignored Lopez's information and proceeded to pressure and manipulate the 12-year-old boy into falsely identifying Rivera.

"While we absolutely commend the Cook County State's Attorneys' Office for its decision to dismiss the charges, simply releasing Mr. Rivera from prison has not made him whole for all that he has suffered," said Jon Loevy, attorney for Rivera. "He deserves compensation for the injustice that cost him so much of his life."

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Roderick MacArthur Justice Center is an Independent, public interest law firm, founded in 1985 by Roderick MacArthur.