



Man declared innocent after 10 years in prison

By Akron Beacon Journal

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A judge ruled that a 12-year-old girl's lie put a man in prison for 10 years for an alleged rape that he did not commit.

The ruling Monday declared Jimmy 'Spunk' Williams innocent and clears the way for the Akron man to collect as much as \$750,000 in compensation. It could be the most the state has ever paid to a wrongfully imprisoned person, exceeding the \$720,645 awarded under previous law in 1984 to William B. Jackson, a Columbus man who also was sentenced on rape charges.

Williams, 31, was released from prison Feb. 14, 2001, soon after the victim said he was not the man who raped her in 1990. He was convicted in 1991, when he was 19.

'I'm just glad that it's over with and that the truth has been told,' Williams said. 'I'm just ready now to live my life and do some things I haven't been able to do.'

Summit County Common Pleas Judge Jane Bond apologized for the community and called him a 'victim of injustice.'

The girl, now 24, testified before Bond last month that the rapist was skinny and dark-skinned but she never saw his face. The mugshots police showed her caused her to select the only skinny, dark-skinned man among them, she said.

The woman never recanted her claim of being raped, but told Bond that she told her mother she had been raped only after her mother found sucker marks on her neck that had been made by a 12-year-old girlfriend. The friend testified last month that she made the marks.

'This case began with a child's lie to avoid a mother's anger,' Bond said. 'That lie then took on tragic dimensions as well-intentioned adults attempted to find the perpetrator. The two children involved are now adults and they have come forward to right the wrong they watched unfold so long ago.'

Ohio Attorney General Betty Montgomery is reviewing Bond's decision and may file an appeal, spokesman Joe Case said.

State attorneys argued that Williams' friends, family and attorney influenced the woman two years ago into doubting her identification of Williams.

Williams, who has spent the last 19 months unemployed and living in poverty, said he plans to buy himself and his mother a house and to star in a movie about his ordeal.

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