

Joey Jones told seven people he shot a man dead outside a Monview Heights tenement and he matched the description two others gave of the killer. However, on the witness stand, Jones pointed the finger at Paul Ford Jr.

Crack addict Nikela Carrington told police she watched Ford rob and kill a man that day in 1994, but she was in her apartment, where a neighboring building would have blocked her view.

Nicole Bennett, a friend of Carrington's and a fellow drug user, denied seeing the shooting for six days, then told police she saw Ford pull the trigger and later admitted conspiring with Carrington to extort money from Ford by threatening to say that he did it.

### **No forensic evidence tied Ford to the killing**

The only witnesses against him were Jones, Carrington and Bennett, all admitted liars.

But seven people, including two jail guards, said Jones confessed to the killing. Two witnesses said they saw a man matching Jones' description flee the shooting and dispose of the weapon, but they never were called to testify.

Ford was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to life without parole.

Twelve years later, the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* and the Innocence Institute of Point Park University investigated the case and found that police ignored evidence which pointed away from Ford and might have got the wrong man, just as Ford has maintained all along.

Ford, a street-level drug dealer, admitted being at the scene of the killing with some associates but denied involvement in it.

He believes he was targeted because of his illegal activities and the fact that, eight years before, his father had shot the lead detective in the investigation. Allegheny County Police Detective Gary Tallent, who is now retired, had survived two shots to the chest during a 1986 hostage siege because he was wearing a bulletproof vest.

Prosecutors have prevailed in Ford's appeals and have repeatedly denied improprieties in the investigation. Detective Tallent, his superiors in the police department and Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala Jr. did not respond to written requests for their views on this case.

Ford, from his cell at the State Correctional Institution at Frackville, continues to maintain his innocence and closes his letters

## **Shaky Testimony Puts Man in Jail for Life – The Paul Ford Jr. Story**

By Bill Moushey and Elizabeth Perry

with: "I have committed no crime, a crime has been committed against me."

### **Maurice Price is killed**

A hulking 410-pound Maurice Price arrived at the Monview Heights housing development in West Mifflin on an unseasonably warm February afternoon 12 years ago worth \$250 to buy a quarter ounce of cocaine.

When he couldn't find his regular dealer, he asked a group of people milling around, including Ford, if anyone else could make the sale.

That is when, according to initial police reports, a short, dark-skinned black man dressed in black, his face covered by a ski mask, a .357-caliber Magnum in his hand, rounded the corner of a building and confronted Price.

"Throw it off," the assailant ordered, demanding Price's money. Price was shot once in the chest.

The gunman fled down a hill and through a playground. Everyone else in the area, including the taller, lighter-skinned Ford, who was wearing a light blue flannel shirt, also ran as Price lay dying, his \$250 gone.

### **Nothing points to Paul Ford**

Amateur video taken by a neighbor 15 minutes after the shooting shows Price's body sprawled in the patchy snow as an angry West Mifflin police officer lambasted wary witnesses.

"When people around here start knowing something, when people around here start seeing something, when people around here start hearing something, then I can do my job!" he shouted as he paced in front of Price's corpse.

Those who did talk provided descriptions of the gunman, which did not match Ford's size, skin color or clothing.

Sara Beatty, of Monview Heights, told police she saw a young, dark-skinned black man in black clothing run from the scene as she was looking out a window for her grandson's school bus. He stopped for a few

seconds by the cellar door under her townhouse, then fled, she said.

A man working at the housing project's security gate gave police a similar account. Under Beatty's door, they found a .357-caliber revolver that proved to be the murder weapon.

The next day, police showed Beatty a picture of Ford and she told them he wasn't the man she saw. They never contacted her again, and neither she nor the guard testified at trial.

### **A witness comes forward**

Ford was well-known in Monview Heights, but only one person, Carrington, initially identified him as the killer.

Police knew Carrington, 21, was, at best, a questionable witness. She was a crack addict with a violent criminal past who had admitted lying under oath.

Carrington had been implicated in the vicious baseball-bat beating death of an ex-boyfriend but had avoided charges by agreeing to testify against the father of her child, who was convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

She later repeatedly told the attorney of the convicted man that she had lied on the stand. During her testimony, she admitted being involved in an earlier baseball-bat beating of a pizza delivery man and spending time in a mental institution after overdosing on drugs.

Despite Carrington's questionable background and considerable contradictory evidence, Detective Tallent secured a written statement from her identifying Ford as the man who had shot Price. She initially had told police Jones also was at the scene, but she omitted his name from her written statement.

That night, after fingering Ford, Carrington went with Ford to the apartment of her friend, Nicole Bennett, to do some cocaine. Both Carrington and Bennett would later admit that, during the drug binge, they promised Ford they would not implicate him in the murder if he paid them. He says he refused to pay them and left.

Ford was arrested the next day based on Carrington's statement. He protested his innocence and said he told Detective Tallent on the way to jail that he had seen Jones shoot Price.

"Tell your father hello" was the response, according to Ford, a reference to the inci-

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dent eight years before when Detective Tallent was shot by Ford's father.

Bennett denied seeing anything on the day of the killing, but police began to pressure her for information after Carrington said Ford had shot Price. The second time she was interviewed by Detective Tallent, Bennett corroborated Carrington's story.

### What about Joey Jones?

A few days later, an anonymous tip led police to Jones.

Initial police reports said Jones was being sought only as a witness, even though both Ford had told them he thought Jones had committed the crime and two of Mr Price's cousins said Jones admitted to the killing while he was being detained pending Ford's trial at the Shuman Juvenile Detention Center.

On his arrest, Jones lied about his name, but police quickly figured out who he was and that he was wanted for a robbery and shooting in North Carolina. At that point, Jones, who matched the witnesses' descriptions of the man who had tossed the gun into Beatty's basement, told police he saw Ford shoot Price.

The day before, Jones had told a woman with whom he was staying that he had shot Price. She would testify that Jones said the gun accidentally fired and that all he wanted was enough money to buy a bus ticket to North Carolina.

At a coroner's inquest, Jones implicated Ford, but Carrington hedged.

"I don't have nothing against nobody sitting there, but I already been through three years of hell and I can't sit up here and testify against nobody. This is just not me," she said, running out of the courtroom.

After police chased her down a hallway and persuaded her to return to the stand, Carrington identified Ford as the killer.

Coroner's Solicitor Arthur Gilkes reluctantly held the case for trial.

"We have two divergent, opposite stories, one which exonerates Paul Ford and the other which inculpates him. The decision has to be done by a jury," he said.

After the inquest, while awaiting trial at Shuman Juvenile Detention Center, Jones told other inmates who were related to Price

in the presence of two guards that he had killed Price. He boasted that he never would be charged.

After reading the account of the Ford case in the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*, James Price, the victim's brother, said that while Jones claimed to be Price's killer and that his relatives beat him over it at Shuman Center, the Price family does not believe Jones did the killing. Even if he did, James Price says he still believes Ford had something to do with it.

### Conflicting testimony

At trial, the three witnesses who testified that Paul Ford killed Maurice Price could agree on little else.

"I don't remember specific, you know, half of what really happened," Carrington said, becoming more and more uncooperative. Allegheny County Common Pleas Judge John Zottola recessed the trial so she could read her previous testimony.

The next day, Carrington related a few details of the crime and identified Ford, mainly by answering yes or no to scenarios posed by Assistant District Attorney Chris Avetta.

Carrington never mentioned seeing Jones at the scene and no one ever asked. She wavered on where she was during the shooting, eventually settling on her apartment. "From where my building is," she said, "you can see everything."

Using the videotape of the scene, a visit to the site, police records and testimony, students at the Innocence Institute confirmed that Carrington could not have seen the shooting from her apartment. The view is obstructed by a building.

Four witnesses testified that Carrington had not ventured outside until after the fatal shot was fired.

Bennett admitted that she lied to police initially, saying she was terrified of Ford. Under cross examination, she admitted letting Ford into her house to do drugs just after the killing and attempting to extort money from him in a plot which, she said, was hatched by Carrington "for him to pay me not to testify."

On the witness stand, Jones denied his jailhouse confessions, despite the seven witnesses who said they had heard them.

Among other contradictory evidence, Bennett said Ford had held the gun in his left

hand when he shot Price. Jones insisted that Ford had held it in his right hand.

Ford's attorney did get Jones to admit that he had lied to police and in testimony about numerous things, including his name, address, age and an alias he had used.

Sara Beatty, the grandmother who had seen the killer dispose of his gun, waited throughout the trial for her turn to suggest it was Jones, not Ford, who had run by her home and tossed the weapon into her basement. She was not called to testify.

Neither was the Monview Heights security guard who had said Jones fit the description of the man he saw.

Ford's attorney, the late Robert Garshak, told the defendant he thought the prosecution's case was so weak that he didn't need their testimony.

### Life without parole

In his closing argument, Garshak chastised prosecutors for bringing charges and said the police had failed even to entertain the possibility that someone other than Ford could have committed the crime. He said they had "quit on this one with two admitted liars and Joey Jones."

Avetta told the jury that Jones' multiple confessions were merely "bait." He added, "Ladies and gentlemen, you are not fish. Certainly not suckers. Don't fall for it. Don't rise up to that bait."

Ford was convicted of second-degree murder and condemned to life in prison without parole. He has lost several appeals.

Those who testified against him have not fared much better.

Jones eluded a murder charge in Pennsylvania but is serving up to 36 years in North Carolina for armed robbery.

Bennett broke into a neighbor's house in 1995. She assaulted a woman, threatened her baby and stole \$342 in money and food stamps. A month later, she pleaded guilty to beating another woman while robbing her of \$14 in cash and a gold ring.

Bennett was given probation for both offenses. In 2003, she was charged with prostitution and jumped bail.

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## “A Long Time Coming!”

Two Innocent Businessmen Were Imprisoned More Than Two Decades For Murdering A Man Scotland Yard Knew Was Alive

By Hans Sherrer

In the early 1970s, Terry Pinfold and Harry MacKenney became partners in the manufacture of underwater diving equipment. They started their company in Dagenham, Essex (near London, England) after their release from prison, where they met. While in prison the men became acquainted with John “Bruce” Childs, and they gave him a job when he was released. Terence Eve, also a former prisoner, owned a teddy bear manufacturing company located in the same



Harry MacKenney and Terry Pinfold outside the courthouse the day of their exoneration.

building as the diving equipment venture.

In the fall of 1974 Eve became a suspect in the hijacking of over \$150,000 (£75,000) in stereo equipment. He apparently

found out before he could be arrested that a warrant had been issued for his role in the theft. Facing five years in prison, Terence Eve left work on a Friday afternoon in November 1974, and he didn't return the following Monday. He seemingly vanished without a trace. His family didn't hear from him again and his body was never found.

## Child confesses to murdering Eve

Police considered Eve's disappearance an unsolved mystery until December 1979, when Childs, who no longer worked for Pinfold and MacKenney, went to police and confessed to murdering Eve in November 1974. He also confessed to murdering five other people who vanished without a trace from November 1974 to October 1978. Childs implicated Pinfold and MacKenney in his confession by telling police the missing people were victims of discount contract killings: Pinfold solicited the jobs and he and MacKenney carried them out.

Childs also told the police that Eve was killed by the three men in his teddy bear factory on

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Carrington has been charged with two violent assaults and several petty crimes. In two incidents, one in which she sliced a woman's face with a broken beer bottle and another in which she attacked two police officers, Carrington was sentenced to probation and enrollment in a substance abuse treatment program.

She has not spent time in prison, but she was shot twice in a drug-related incident.

While she refused comment when confronted in Rankin by Innocence Institute students in 2004, and her mother responded to letters in a profanity-laced refusal to discuss the matter, a woman who described herself as Carrington called a day after a story about the Ford case appeared in the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*.

She told Elizabeth Perry of the Innocence Institute that she was going to sue over the story and stated she's glad Paul Ford Jr. is rotting in jail. “F\*\*\* him, he's going to do all the f\*\*\*\*\* time for killing that guy because he did it,” she said, before hanging up the telephone from an area outside of Pennsylvania.

## Three Years of Hell

When Nikela Carrington, the first person to implicate Paul Ford Jr., talked about living “three years of hell” at the inquest into the murder of Maurice Price before fleeing those proceedings, she was referring in part to her experiences in the drug world.

The hell she described also related to her spotty record as a star witness in which she repeatedly testified others in crimes some have claimed she was responsible for.

Four years before she provided questionable statements in the case against Ford, the entire prosecution in the Anthony “Two-Tone” Turner murder case rested on her testimony.

In that case, Carrington was the sole witness who testified Turner, her boyfriend, killed Cordell “Corey” Franklin by beating him to death with a baseball bat, setting his body on fire and turning all the gas burners up on the stove in order to ignite the building he lay dead in.

Carrington was never charged in the crime, despite her admitted involvement and physical evidence found on her clothes. Just as in the case against Ford, no forensic evidence linked Turner to the murder.

John Markowitz, a juror in the first trial against Turner trial said Carrington “stumbled” on her way to the witness stand and was “obviously stoned.”

“It made me very skeptical of the judicial process,” Markowitz added.

The first trial ended in a hung jury, but the second concluded with Turner being convicted and sentenced to life.

Months later, Carrington began calling Turner's attorney repeatedly, claiming that she'd lied on the witness stand. Despite that, Turner has failed to win a new trial.

Carrington testified against Paul Ford Jr. in 2003, then continued her plunge into drug addiction and associated crime until eight years later when she was shot in the head.

She survived the shooting and told police her cousin, Alon “Beano” Carrington was her

attacker. After seeing several men arrested with her cousin on television, Carrington accused them as well. Carrington was once again the only link the prosecution had.

Pittsburgh Attorney Ralph Karsh represented one of the four men accused. Of the four, two spent less than twenty-four months in jail on reduced charges in plea agreements and charges the other two were dismissed due to the unreliability of Carrington's testimony. Karsh says Carrington's testimony was tainted because she was “drug addled” and a “crack head fool.”

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Prisoners in Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia *only* who are claiming innocence can write:

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