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Clain has worked on more than 155 capital cases. He won notoriety for helping exonerate three wrongly convicted men in Florida. McClain says he believes race may have been a factor in the confusion over the photo identifications since the victims were white and the perpetrators were black.

"Is this a situation where one black man is as good as another? I hate to level the racism charge, but there does seem to be this acceptance or this failure to question these discrepancies," McClain said.

Crotzer's attorneys persuaded Sinacore to allow them to send the slides to Dr. Edward Blake in Richmond, Calif. A pioneer in DNA forensics, Blake has run Forensic Science Associates since 1978. His lab has received national recognition for its work as an independent testing lab for postconviction testing. The lab's work proved crucial; test results showed DNA evidence excluded Crotzer as a rapist.

On Feb. 4, Menschel and McClain filed a motion asking a Hillsborough court to throw out Crotzer's conviction and sentence.

"Every day that Alan Crotzer remains in prison is a day too long," Menschel said. "He's served 24 years for a crime he didn't commit. The time to free him is now."

The Crotzer Case Timeline

July 8, 1981: Corlenzo James, his brother Douglas and a third man drive to Tampa, where they rob five people at an apartment on Yorkshire Court, then abduct and rape a 12-year-old girl and 38-year-old woman.

July 9, 1981: Detectives show the five victims dozens of photos. Some identify Corlenzo and Douglas James. The 38-year-old woman identifies Alan Crotzer as the ringleader and double rapist.

July 10, 1981: At his girlfriend's home in St. Petersburg, police arrest Crotzer in the robbery and rapes.

April 22, 1982: A jury convicts Crotzer and Douglas James of robbery and rape, and they are each sentenced to more than 100 years in prison.

December 2002: The Innocence Project in New York begins investigating Crotzer's claim that he was wrongly convicted and asks the Hillsborough County State Attorney's Office for permission to test for DNA on evidence leftover from the case.

State Court Rules on Citation of Unpublished Opinions

I	II	III	IV	V
All Opinions Citable	Citable as Precedent	Citable for Persuasive Value	Too Close to Call	Citation Prohibited
Connecticut	Delaware North Dakota Ohio ⁵ Utah	Alaska ¹ Iowa Kansas Oklahoma ⁶ Michigan Minnesota Mississippi ³ New Jersey New York Vermont Virginia	Georgia Oregon New Mexico Wyoming	Alabama, Arizona Arkansas, California Colorado, Dist. of Col. Florida, Hawaii Idaho, Illinois Indiana, Kentucky Louisiana, Maine Maryland ² Massachusetts Missouri, Montana Nebraska, Nevada New Hampshire North Carolina ⁴ Pennsylvania Rhode Island South Carolina South Dakota Tennessee ⁷ , Texas ⁸ Washington West Virginia, Wisconsin
1	4	11	4	31

Notes:

- 1 Citation prohibited by statute. Citation approved for "persuasive power" only by appellate decision.
- 2 May be cited for any purpose except as precedent or "persuasive authority."
- 3 Decisions prior to Nov. 1, 1998, are not citable under any circumstance.
- 4 Citable only if no published case covers the issue, otherwise citation disfavored.
- 5 Applicable to decisions on or after May 1, 2002.
- 6 Citable only if no published case covers the issue, otherwise citation disfavored.
- 7 Unpublished opinions not designated "not for citation" can be cited for persuasive authority only.
- 8 Tex. R. App. P. 77.3 (Ct of Crim. Appeals) "no value as precedent and must not be cited as authority."

Source: Federal and State Court Rules Governing Publication and Citation of Opinions: An Update, Melissa M. Serfass and Jessie Wallace Cranford, *The Journal of Appellate Practice and Process*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 2004).

May 2003: Douglas James tells an Innocence Project attorney that he was one of the robbers, fingers his brother, Corlenzo, as the ringleader and says another man - not Crotzer - was there the night of the robbery.

August 2003: DNA forensics pioneer Dr. Edward Blake confirms through testing at his Richmond, Calif., lab that DNA evidence excludes Crotzer as the rapist.

February 2004: Crotzer's attorneys file a motion to have the sentence and charges against him dismissed.

Candace Rondeau is a *St. Petersburg Times* staff writer.

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