

Romain Steven Isham Awarded \$25,000 For 20 Years Of Punishment For His Wrongful Conviction

Romain Steven Isham was awarded \$25,000 by the Wisconsin Claims Board on October 27, 2011 as compensation for 10 years of wrongful imprisonment for the sexual assault of an 8-year-old boy that he didn't commit. He also registered as a sex offender for 10 years after his release from prison.

Isham was 32 when he was prosecuted in 1990 for allegedly sexually assaulting the 8-year-old son of his live-in girlfriend in Douglas County, Wisconsin. Isham denied the accusation and there was no physical evidence he committed the crime. The prosecution's key evidence was the boy's testimony, which the jury believed in convicting Isham. After Isham was released in 2000 after serving 10 years in prison, he had to register as a sex offender.

In 2009 investigator James Ohm with the Wisconsin Department of Justice was interviewing the mother of the boy Isham had been convicted of assaulting, when the mother told Ohm that the boy had recanted his accusation years earlier. Ohm reported that information to the Douglas County DA's Office, and he was told to conduct an investigation. Ohm discovered that in 1998 the boy recanted his testimony to authorities in Sheboygan County, where he lived at that time. The authorities in Sheboygan County didn't relay the new information to the Douglas County DA. Ohm interviewed the alleged victim, Jeremy Kaseno, who was then 28. Kaseno told him that he first re-



Romain Steven Isham in October 2012 (Belami County, MN)

canted in 1993 when he was 11. He also said that he was very young when he falsely accused Isham and he got caught up in the lie and his abusive father pressured him to maintain the lie.

Based on the new evidence Isham's conviction was vacated in May 2010. During that hearing Douglas County Circuit Court Judge Kelly Thimm [said Isham's case](#) "is probably every citizen's worst nightmare, let alone a judge and a former prosecutor, to see an innocent man convicted wrongfully. Not only was an innocent person convicted but an innocent person spent a substantial time in prison and was required to register as a sex offender. Our government system failed in this case, and I apologize." With his conviction vacated Isham no longer had to register as a sex offender.

In July 2010 Isham filed a claim with the Wisconsin Claim Board for \$3,650,000 -- \$1,000 for each day he was wrongly imprisoned. However, Wisconsin's wrongful conviction compensation statute only provides for compensation of \$5,000 per year for no more than 5 years, or a total payment of \$25,000. On October 27, 2011 [the Board voted](#) to award Isham the maximum payment of \$25,000 based on its determination there was clear and convincing evidence he was innocent of his convicted crime. The Board can recommend that the state Legislature award more money in a special bill and it has done so in several wrongful conviction cases. However, it didn't make that recommendation in Isham's case, and it didn't provide any explanation for why it decided not to do so. The Board's decision can be appealed.

A Wisconsin legislator can independently file a bill to award Isham additional compensation for his 20 years of punishment, 12 of those years after authorities were notified he had committed no crime. After the Board made its announcement [Isham told reporters](#), "I'm looking for somebody to help me out. I expected to get more. I had my own job making about \$2,000 a month when I went in, and that's a quarter million. That's not counting the hardship of being raped and beaten up in prison, and then the years I was made to register as a sex offender."

[Isham describes his](#) time in prison as hell because other prisoners unrelentingly abused the convicted child molesters. He said he was regularly raped and beaten. He saw child sex offenders stabbed and set on fire, not knowing if or when he would be

next. Isham said he suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome from his years of torment behind bars. He also said that during his 10 years as a registered sex offender he was unable to keep a steady job because as soon as an employer found out "they would tell me to get off their (expletive) property."

Isham can't afford a lawyer so he filed and handled his compensation claim.

Isham refused a plea bargain before his trial and while imprisoned he refused to participate in sex-offender treatment that would have lessened his prison time, because both required he confess to a crime he didn't commit.

Isham, now 53, lives in Duluth, Minnesota.

Sources:

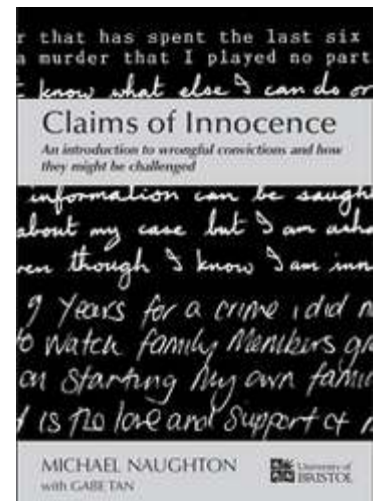
[Man granted \\$25,000 compensation](#) after 20 years of punishment for crime he did not commit, *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 27, 2011

[Duluth man gets \\$25,000](#) after 10 years in Wisconsin prison on wrongful conviction, *Duluth News Tribune*, October 28, 2011

"Claims of Innocence" Now Available For Downloading

Claims of Innocence: An introduction to wrongful convictions and how they might be challenged, is an 80-page booklet by Michael Naughton with Gabe Tan. Published in 2010 by the University of Bristol, Claims of Innocence can now be downloaded for no charge by clicking here.

Michael Naughton is founder and director of the Innocence Network UK, and although Claims of Innocence is specific to the United Kingdom, much of its information, particularly in "Part 3: Proving your innocence," is applicable to the United States and other countries.



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Based on discovery of the concealed evidence, in December 2011 nine police officers [were placed under](#) criminal investigation for misconduct by the UK's Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). Among the nine were four police chiefs, including the national head of ethics in policing.

Sources:

[Five men jailed for murder of Wolverhampton drug dealer Kevin Nunes have convictions overturned](#), *Birmingham Post* (Birmingham, England), March 8, 2012

[Kevin Nunes killing](#): Five cleared at appeal court, BBC News, March 8, 2012

[Police chiefs investigated for misconduct over gang-land killing case](#), *The Guardian* (London), Dec. 22, 2011.