

Henry Lee McCollum and Leon Brown Exonerated By New Evidence After 31 Years of Wrongful Imprisonment

After 31 years of wrongful imprisonment half-brothers Henry Lee McCollum and Leon Brown [were released](#) based on new evidence they are innocent of the rape and murder of 11-year-old Sabrina Buie in Red Springs, North Carolina in September 1983. The new evidence was the DNA profile identified from a cigarette butt found *near* Ms. Buie's body that doesn't match McCollum or Brown — but does match a man currently imprisoned for the rape and murder of a teenage girl in Red Springs a month after Ms. Buie's murder.

The 19-year-old McCollum and 15-year-old Brown had recently moved to North Carolina from New Jersey, when they were arrested after a local teenager cast suspicion on McCollum in Ms. Buie's death. After five hours of interrogation without a lawyer present and not being allowed to see his mother, and during which McCollum was threatened he could be executed if he did not cooperate, the police suggested to him he could go home if he told them he committed the crime. After McCollum told the



Leon Brown after his exoneration on September 2, 2014 (Jenny Warburg)

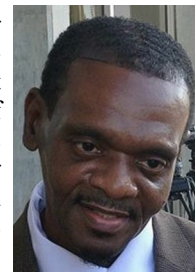
police he and three other youths attacked and killed the girl [he asked](#) the detectives: "Can I go home now?"

Brown was also being interrogated and threatened with execution if he didn't confess. He steadfastly denied any involvement in the crime until told that McCollum had confessed. Both young men are "intellectually disabled," and they subsequently recanted their confessions as coerced.

The prosecution had no physical, forensic or eyewitness evidence linking McCollum and Brown to the crime, so their convictions of rape and murder in 1984 were based on their confessions. Both were sentenced to death. After their convictions were overturned on appeal, McCollum was again convicted of rape and murder in 1991 and sentenced to death. Brown was retried in 1992 and after being convicted of only rape, he was sentenced to life in prison.

On August 26, 2014 lawyers for McCollum and Brown [filed a motion](#) in Robeson County that requested the overturning of their convictions and dismissal of the charges based on new DNA evidence from a

cigarette butt found near Ms. Buie's body that excluded the two men, but matched the DNA of Roscoe Artis. Artis is currently imprisoned for a teenager's rape and murder in Red Springs about a month after Ms. Buie's murder. The motion also included evidence that Artis had admitted to fellow prisoners that he raped and killed Ms. Buie, and that McCollum and Brown were not involved.



Henry McCollum after his exoneration on September 2, 2014 (Jenny Warburg)

A week later, on September 2, 2014, Superior Court Judge Douglas B. Sasser [granted the motion](#) and ordered the immediate release of McCollum, 50, and Brown, 46.

McCollum had spent almost 30 years on death row for his rape and murder convictions, while Brown was serving life in prison for his rape conviction.

Source: [DNA Evidence Clears Two Men](#) in 1983 Murder, *The New York Times*, Sept. 2, 2014

[North Carolina Men Are Released](#) After Convictions Are Overturned, *The New York Times*, September 3, 2014

[Motion says Roscoe Artis killed Buie](#): Seeks release of McCollum, Brown, [www.robsonian.com](#), August 27, 2014



Jerry Lee Brock Released After 19 Years In Prison When Accuser Recants

Jerry Lee Brock [was released](#) on November 20, 2014 after 19 years and 4 months in prison for a child molestation the alleged victim now admits never occurred.

In early 1995 Brock was living in Thurston County, Washington. His girlfriend's 11-year-old daughter, Regina Rush, accused Brock of molesting her while she was in bed. Brock was charged on March 29, 1995 with first-degree child molestation and appointed a public defender.

Jury selection for Brock's trial began on July 10, 1995. The prosecution's case was primarily based on Rush's testimony, although a detective also testified that when arrested Brock made a vague comment that he "made a mistake." Brock's defense was the incident never happened. On July 12 the jury convicted Brock of one count of first-degree child molestation. Brock was taken

into custody. He had two prior non-violent felony convictions -- promoting prostitution and burglary -- and he was sentenced on November 3, 1995 to life in prison without the possibility of parole under Washington's "three-strikes" law.



Thurston County Courthouse (Olympia, Wash.)

Brock's direct appeal was denied by the Washington Court of Appeals in 1997 and the Washington Supreme Court declined to review his case. Brock then filed a personal restraint petition (PRP) (Washington's version of a post-conviction petition) in 2000 that asserted his burglary conviction was invalid and therefore it should not have been used as a basis for determining he was a persistent offender. That petition was denied. In 2007 Brock filed his second PRP, which asserted Washington's Persistent Offender Accountability Act — Initiative 593 passed by the voters in 1994 — was unconstitutional. The court of appeals ruled that Brock's claim was time barred because he needed to raise the issue within one year of his conviction becoming final in 1997.

Then, out of the blue, in 2012 Rush contacted the police in Thurston County and admitted that she had made up the accusation against Brock. At the time she contacted the police Rush didn't know

Brock was still in prison. Rush gave a six-page typewritten statement that she signed. She said she made up the story because she wanted her mother to pay attention to her and she was worried that Brock was a drug user and a bad influence on her mom. She said she had previously been taken away from her mother due to her mother's drug use, and she didn't want it to happen again because of Brock. Rush explained why she was coming forward after 17 years:

"Telling the truth is very important to me now as an adult because now that I am older I realize I do not get anywhere lying. ... I feel like now is the time to tell the truth and get it off my chest. ... I feel bad and the lie eats me up all the time. ... I have a one-year old daughter that I

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