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James Woodard is Dallas County's 17th Wrongfully-Convicted Citizen
Favorable DNA results clear him of 1980 murder after serving 27 years in prison

(DALLAS – April 28, 2008) – A hearing will be held tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. CDT in the 265th Judicial District Court, Judge Mark Stoltz presiding, to announce the findings of post-conviction DNA test results for James Woodard, who was convicted by a jury of murder in 1981. Woodard, who is represented by the Innocence Project of Texas, has spent the past 27 years in prison and was serving a life sentence for the murder of Beverly Jones. He is the 17th person in Dallas County cleared of a crime by DNA evidence since the statute was passed in 2001 allowing convicted inmates to request post-conviction DNA testing.

“After a careful review of the files in this case by our Conviction Integrity Unit, it is apparent that James Woodard did not have a fair trial back in 1981 and the results of his post-conviction DNA test exclude him as the perpetrator of any sexual assault that may have occurred, making him eligible for bond while we finalize our investigation on this case,” said Dallas County District Attorney Craig Watkins.

James Woodard was convicted on circumstantial evidence of a murder that occurred at the end of 1980. Woodard who had been involved in a relationship with the victim, Beverly Jones who was 18-years-old at the time, was convicted, primarily, on the testimony of two witnesses, both of whom testified that they knew both Woodard and Jones. Woodard has adamantly maintained his innocence from the first time he was interviewed by the police.

Jones was strangled and her body was found near the banks of the Trinity River on December 31, 1980. Evidence collected in a rape kit revealed the presence of sperm and anal trauma, possibly the result of a sexual assault. DNA evidence excludes Woodard as the donor of the sperm found on the victim's body.

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Previous requests by Woodard for DNA testing were denied prior to Mr. Watkins' administration. Additionally, the defense's motion for a new trial based on undisclosed *Brady* information was denied. The defense learned after the trial that there were three men, Eddie Woodard (no relation to James Woodard), Theodore Blaylock and Ed Mosley, who had been seen with the victim just hours before she was murdered. Two of those men, Eddie Woodard now a registered sex offender who has absconded from probation and Blaylock later were involved in separate brutal sexual assaults. This information was never turned over to the defense during Woodard's 1981 trial.

Prior to his conviction, James Woodard had two prior felonies, however, neither previous offense was violent or a sex offense.

The Conviction Integrity Unit at the DA's Office will continue its investigation to make a final determination of James Woodard's innocence of all crimes committed in this case before he can be fully considered for exoneration.

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