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## 19th Exoneree Sees Hope in Future of Legal System

**FORT WORTH, Texas** – Following more than 25 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, Johnnie Lindsey wants to be sure that the lawyers of tomorrow know that they hold the fate of many in their hands.

Lindsey, who is the 19<sup>th</sup> person to be exonerated in Dallas County, was the guest of honor at the Wesleyan Innocence Project's annual exoneree luncheon on Tuesday, Feb. 3. The event was held in the law school's Bernie Schuchmann Conference Center and was attended by more than 50 students, staff and faculty members.

Michelle Moore is a public defender for Dallas County and she represented Lindsey in his appeal for exoneration.

"Johnnie's case was not clear-cut," Moore said to students at the luncheon. "Sometimes there's more to the story than meets the eye. If there's something to test, we should test it."

Lindsey was charged with and convicted of aggravated sexual assault at the age of 30. He then spent the next 25 years and 11 months of his life in prison. By choosing to maintain his innocence, Lindsey was never eligible for parole. He repeatedly filed motions requesting to have his case reviewed, and all but the last went unanswered.

"I filed six motions to Dallas County for [blood] testing," Lindsey said. "I would wait two years for a response. [The letters] were never answered. I wrote my last motion, my seventh, and finally a judge appointed Michelle to my case."

Lindsey was exonerated in September 2008, and just five months out of prison, he speaks openly about his experience, with little display of anger or resentment. When asked about his view of the legal system that put him in jail for another man's crime, Lindsey said he thinks the system is fundamentally broken, though he has developed a more positive outlook in recent years. He credits "new blood" in the Dallas County District Attorney's office, and said that the younger people entering the legal system have "better and brighter" ideas than their predecessors.

Speaking to law students and other members of the legal profession is important to Lindsey, because he wants them to be aware of the power they have.

"Don't spend all of your time learning the law and then become lawless," Lindsey told students. "The people I had to deal with had no regard for the law. You hold the future of a lot of people in your hands. I can't stress enough that it is up to you. You are the future of the law."

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