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## Video: Thirty Years After Wrongful Conviction: Reflections from Exoneree Dennis Maher

Boston College Law School

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## Video: Thirty Years After Wrongful Conviction: Reflections from Exoneree Dennis Maher

2014 NEWS ARCHIVE

03/03/14

Newton, MA--Boston College Law School and BC's Innocence Project proudly welcomed Dennis Maher, his former attorney Aliza Kaplan, and former Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney J.W. Carney, Jr. to Boston College Law School's East Wing 120 for a panel discussion from 12:30-2:00 p.m. on Friday, March 21, 2014.

The discussion, "Thirty Years After Wrongful Conviction," featured Dennis Maher, who spent 19 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, and the attorneys who advocated for his conviction and subsequent exoneration.

In 1984, Army Sergeant Dennis Maher was convicted of multiple counts of rape, attempted rape, and assault arising out of three separate incidents in Lowell and Ayer, MA. Mr. Maher was convicted based solely on eyewitness identification by the three victims.

Incarcerated in the Massachusetts Treatment Center at Bridgewater for sex offenders, Mr. Maher consistently maintained his innocence. In 1993, Mr. Maher wrote to the Innocence Project requesting assistance, but the state claimed there was no physical evidence from the cases to test.

In 2001, a law student working with the then newly established New England Innocence Project found physical evidence from Mr. Maher's case in the basement of the Middlesex County Courthouse. DNA testing of that evidence conclusively excluded Mr. Maher as the perpetrator of the crimes, and on April 3, 2003, he was exonerated and released after serving 19 years in prison for crimes he did not commit. The Middlesex County District Attorney's Office joined in

Mr. Maher's motion for a new trial and agreed to drop all charges against him.

Minutes after Mr. Maher was exonerated, J.W. Carney, Jr. (Law '78), the former ADA who prosecuted Mr. Maher in 1984 and had since become a prominent criminal defense attorney, apologized to Mr. Maher directly. This apology helped Mr. Maher to move forward in his life and embrace the positive instead of dwelling on the injustices he endured.

In the 11 years since his release, Mr. Maher has married and had two children, one of whom is named after his Innocence Project lawyer, Aliza Kaplan, who is now a Law Professor at Lewis & Clark Law School.

Together for the first time since Mr. Maher's 2003 exoneration, Mr. Maher, Professor Kaplan, and Attorney Carney discussed their experiences and reflections on Mr. Maher's wrongful conviction and exoneration as well as their perspectives about moving forward.