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# **Man jailed for 17 years exonerated of 1984 rape, murder**

## Judge cites DNA evidence in overturning conviction

**DETROIT, Michigan (AP) --** A judge on Monday freed a man who had been found guilty of raping and murdering a teenage girl in the 1980s. The man had confessed but recent DNA tests showed he couldn't have been the killer.

Upon hearing his conviction was overturned after 17 years in prison, Eddie Joe Lloyd thrust his arms forward and gave an emphatic "Thank you."

"I want to run the 50- or 100-yard dash with my grandbabies," he said afterward.

Lloyd was in a mental hospital and on medication when police say he confessed to raping and murdering 16-year-old Michelle Jackson in 1984.

DNA tests just completed show Lloyd didn't commit the crime, and Detroit police and prosecutors joined Monday in calling on Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Leonard Townsend to release Lloyd from prison. The case has bolstered calls for a probe into Detroit police methods.

While throwing out the conviction, Townsend, who was the original trial judge, put part of the blame on Lloyd.

"Even though he may have lied about what he did, the fault falls on him," Townsend said. "I never heard this gentleman say, 'I didn't do it.'"

Lloyd becomes the 110th convicted person in the United States and the first in Michigan to be exonerated by DNA testing, according to the Innocence Project,

which seeks to use DNA evidence to help innocent prisoners. DNA testing techniques were not available to help defendants until the last decade or so.

The DNA break could lead to even more scrutiny of the Detroit Police Department, which has been the target of an investigation by the U.S. Justice Department since 2000 for fatal shootings by officers, claims of prisoner mistreatment and other alleged misconduct.

At a late morning news conference, Lloyd burst into tears after taking the podium.

He said that the efforts that led to his freedom "did what she (Jackson) couldn't do, speak from the grave."

"Lady Justice is blind. Sometimes, she's deaf," he said. "Sometimes the wheels of justice grind very slowly, sometimes they grind in reverse."

After the news conference, he hugged family members and told them, "It's going to be all right."

Barry Scheck, an attorney with the Innocence Project, and Saul Green, former U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, will ask federal officials to investigate Detroit police in the Lloyd case.

Lloyd was sentenced to life in prison in the rape and murder of Jackson after his purported confession. Lloyd had contacted police after overhearing details about the case at a convenience store.

Detroit Police Inspector William Rice, who was present when Lloyd confessed, said the department agreed that the conviction should be thrown out. But he said that at the time, the confession Lloyd gave was compelling.

But Scheck said it wasn't really a confession. He said police got it by telling Lloyd that he could help "smoke out" the real perpetrator and provided him with details of the crime that he couldn't have known, Scheck said.

Wayne County Prosecutor Michael Duggan said his office doesn't believe there was willful wrongdoing by police.

The DNA evidence in Jackson's slaying was gathered from a bottle and the long johns found at the crime scene, as well as from vaginal slides discovered three weeks ago, Scheck said. The DNA doesn't match any samples in the FBI's database, meaning Lloyd couldn't have committed the crime.

Scheck said the case illustrates the need for recording interrogations, and for using special caution when questioning people who are mentally ill or mentally retarded.

If Michigan had the death penalty, Scheck said there's a good chance Lloyd would have been sentenced to death, noting that the judge lamented that the court could not

impose the death penalty.

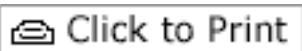
The Innocence Project has been working on the Lloyd case for seven years, Scheck said. Other recent cases the project has handled include that of a St. Louis man who spent nearly 18 years behind bars for rape.

A Michigan law that went into effect last year allows inmates to ask the court for DNA testing and a new trial if they can show the tests might prove their innocence.

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