Katie Garding’s clemency petition considered at rare hearing

The Montana Board of Pardons and Parole heard evidence of MTIP client Katie Garding’s innocence at an executive clemency hearing on June 30. Most requests for executive clemency never make it past the application phase. If granted, executive clemency would end the 40-year sentence Katie is currently serving for a 2008 vehicular homicide she did not commit.

The Board heard crash reconstruction evidence that proves it is scientifically impossible for Katie’s car to have been the striking vehicle and explanations of how ineffective assistance of counsel played a role in Katie’s wrongful conviction. Katie candidly shared with the Board about how being wrongfully convicted has impacted her life and what she has accomplished since being paroled early this year. Katie was wrongfully incarcerated for 10 years in
Montana Women Prison and will be wrongfully supervised on parole for the remaining 30 years of her sentence.

The next step is for the Board to make a recommendation to Governor Gianforte about whether to grant Katie executive clemency. We will send an email update when they issue their recommendation.

Just three days before the hearing, Katie shared her wrongful conviction experience at a live storytelling event called Tell Us Something and received a standing ovation from the crowd of more than 300 people.

“I was extremely nervous because you never know how people are going to react to a story like this, but the fact that everyone was so supportive even during my story gave me so much relief and I was so grateful for them,” Katie said.

Click here to listen to the audio recording of Katie telling her story.

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**MTIP prepares to appeal denial of Kelly Worthan’s Petition for Post-Conviction Relief**
After over two years of waiting for a response, MTIP client Kelly Worthan’s Petition for Post Conviction Relief was denied on June 21. We are currently preparing to appeal the denial to the Montana Supreme Court. Kelly was wrongfully convicted in 2004 of Sexual Intercourse Without Consent, Incest, and Tampering With Witnesses and Informants. District Judge Lint sealed the case on April 10, 2020. We cannot discuss the details of the wrongful conviction; although, we look forward to sharing the overwhelming evidence of Kelly’s innocence with you in the future.

“I just want my name cleared off,” Kelly said. “I don’t want anything more. I just want to be able to live my life free and try to regain what I lost. And like I said, I want to repay those who stood behind me and do what I can to help them.”

Read more about Kelly [here](#).

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**MTIP merch store coming soon!**

We are excited to announce that we will be opening our online merchandise store in September. T-shirts, stickers, coffee mugs, and tote bags will be available for purchase with proceeds supporting our work to free the innocent and unjustly incarcerated, and advocate for systems of Justice that are accurate, accountable, and fair for all. We will send out an email when the store is open!

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**MTIP summer photo journalism intern captures powerful images**

This summer, MTIP hosted journalism student Sarah Mosquera as our summer intern. Notably, Sarah reported on a story about how wrongful conviction and racism perpetuates mass incarceration, which we published on Juneteenth to support a conversation about how innocent Black people remain unfree. The story featured a discussion with innocence advocate Robyn Trent Jefferson and was recognized by The Innocence Project’s Executive Director Christina Swarns on Twitter. This summer, Sarah also captured beautiful images of incarcerated clients, criminal justice advocates, and artwork by MTIP client Bernard Pease. See some of the images below:
With the completion of this internship, Sarah will graduate with her Master’s of Art in Journalism. She will begin a new position as NPR’s Photo Editor Intern in October and has graciously offered to continue on a volunteer basis as MTIP’s photographer.

Sarah is the first journalism student to benefit from the generous donations made to the Spencer Veysey Memorial Fund. Spencer began his work with MTIP as a journalism student before becoming a talented investigator, contributing to seven exonerations. In coming summers, we will continue to offer a paid journalism internship in memory of Spencer’s legacy.

*Below are photos Sarah took last week of MTIP clients Kelly Worthan and Aaron Oliphant who are wrongfully incarcerated at Montana State Prison and artwork in the prison’s hobby store beautifully crafted by MTIP client Bernard Pease:*