

**The need-responsive**

# **Public Exoneration**

**of**

# **Steph Turner**

**Need-response is a new professional service to identify and address needs underserved by other professions.**

**That includes the need to effectively identify and efficiently address wrongful convictions of the criminally innocent.**

**While complementing law enforcement, it can also compete with the slow process of the adversarial judicial system.**

**This tool is specifically for the wrongly convicted innocent who has left prison.**

# Public Exoneration of Steph Turner

Case: **PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN V STEPHEN DENNIS TURNER**

Docket ID: Case No. 93-63014-FCB Appeal ID: Court of Appeals No. 173814 & 172928

User name, if different from claimant

First name

Last name

Claimant name

First name

Steph

Last name

Turner

**“We know without doubt that the vast majority of innocent defendants who are convicted of crimes are never identified and cleared.”**

- Samuel Gross, editor of the [National Registry of Exonerations](#), as reported in 2015 in the [Washington Post](#).

Date of arrest 7/7/1993

Year of conviction 1993

Convicted of child sex abuse

Sentence 15 to 30 years

Presiding judge Dennis Kolenda

Chief prosecutor Kevin Bramble

Year released from prison 2005

Jurisdiction Kent County, Michigan

## Court address

Name 17th Circuit Court Kent County Courthouse

Address1 180 Ottawa Avenue, NW

Address2

City, ST zip Grand Rapids Michigan 49503

## DA office

Name Mr. Christopher R. Becker

Address1 Kent County District Attorney

Address2 83 Ionia Avenue NW, Suite 450

City, ST zip Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

# ↑ A need to declare innocence publicly ↓

## What is this?

### 1. We trust you can admit how the adversarial judicial process is prone to errors.

**Confirmation bias.** Prosecutors and investigators under pressure to solve a reported crime are prone to interpret the evidence in ways that reinforce their presumptions of guilt of a detainee. Rarely to they check their biases with disconfirming alternatives.

**Motivated reasoning.** Once invested in their primary suspect, they are prone to rationalize their invested decisions in ways that support their conclusions. Evidence pointing to another perpetrator, or other contingencies indicating the suspect is likely innocent, often gets ignored.

**Tunnel vision.** As the prosecutor and investigators narrow their scope to close to try to promptly close the case, they unwittingly help to convict persons who had no role in the reported crime. They can even convince themselves that a crime occurred when none occurred at all.

### 2. We draw your attention to a hidden crisis of wrongly convicted innocence.

**Scope of this problem.** Academics estimate between 1 to 6% of the prison population are actually innocent. They played no role in the reported crime. Many leave prison without their full rights. The actual perpetrator often gets overlooked, inflicting more violence.

	Prison population 2,000,000	Custody population 7,500,000	Felon population 19,000,000
1%	20,000	75,000	190,000
4%	80,000	300,000	760,000
6%	120,000	450,000	1,140,000

At no fault of their own, countless lost their right to meaningfully enjoy life. While some may have been involved in some unsavory yet legal activity, others had no criminal record at all.

### 3. We offer you and the claimant this workable solution: Public Exoneration.

**Non-adversarial.** This tool strips away any incentive to take sides. It exists to shine a light on this underserved problem. While claimants are grateful for the innocence movement, many remain overlooked by it. Let's face it, wrongful convictions occur at a faster pace in the adversarial process than it can correct them.

**Empirical.** This tool provides a dozen factors that help the claimant to demonstrate their innocence. Each increases the likelihood of actual innocence. Most can be verified checking their public record.

**Alternative.** This tool flips the script. We could accuse the adversarial system for damaging so many innocent lives. Instead of being adversarial, it applies an engaging process of mutual regard. It gladly incentivizes all sides to humbly admit their imperfections and to better understand each other's needs.

Innocence Profile

Innocence Index: case preview triage

# ↑ Public Declaration of Innocence - p1 of 4 ↓

Steph demonstrates their innocence as soon as they assert their right to a trial. They accept the risk of a lengthier sentence if found guilty. If offered a plea deal, or reduction of charges, they show how they are not guilty of anything when turning it down without thought. If they seriously considered it, they appear to be complicit on some level.

- 1. Did Steph ever turn down a plea deal or an option to reduce the charges, so they can challenge all charges at a trial?

yes

Steph is more likely fully innocent than not. Taking the risk of being found guilty on all counts demonstrates more integrity than pursuing the self-interest of avoiding further punishment.

Such a decision can be recognized by the existence of trial transcripts. In Steph's own words...

My defense counsel could have filed a motion to reduce charges, as the Appellate panel did years later, but I declined as I was willing to challenge all of the charges no matter what they were.

- 2. If turning down a plea deal or opportunity to reduce charges, then found guilty at trial, did Steph express any regret? (left blank if took a plea deal)

no regret

Steph presents as more likely innocent than not. Claimant shows how they value their personal integrity more than their personal freedom.

Such a self-reported response merits skepticism. Put it in context of these other factors.

- 3. If Steph received a lengthy "trial penalty" sentence, did Steph ever regret not taking a plea deal or admitting some guilt up front?

no regret

Steph presents as more likely fully innocent than not. Claimant willingly sacrifices their freedom to uphold their overlooked innocence.

Such a self-reported response merits skepticism. Put it in context of these other factors. Steph explains:

I was originally sentenced to 15 to 30 years. While disturbed by how harsh that was, I never once regretted sticking to my integrity.

# ↑ Public Declaration of Innocence - p2 of 4 ↓

Steph demonstrates their innocence as they consistently inform the parole board of their lack of criminal guilt. They accept the likelihood of being denied parole, for "lack of remorse". They value their integrity over freedom of movement. They reinforce their innocence with their institutional record, such as a lack of conduct tickets and a clean work record.

4. Did Steph consistently maintain their innocence each time they met the parole board, despite a likely consequence of parole denial?

yes

Steph is more likely fully innocent than not. No known pathology can explain why any prisoner would insist they're innocent in the face of repeated parole denial. The only viable explanation is that Steph is actually innocent as claimed.

Such a decision can be recognized by Steph's institutional record. Steph explains:

I first met the parole board in 2001. I "maxed out" in 2005 without parole.

5. Was Steph ever released on parole, or instead was Steph discharged on the maximum outdate?

no parole, full sentence

Steph is more likely fully innocent than not. This also demonstrates innocence and integrity by willingly enduring repeated rejections.

Such an action can be verified by Steph's institutional record.

6. How many major misconducts did Steph receive while in prison?

1

One major misconduct incident in prison could undercut full innocence, but context is everything.

Such a number can be recognized by Steph's institutional record. Steph adds context:

I was asked to cut a branch from a tree in the prison yard to make a dreamcatcher. Since the tree was valued over \$200, the prison guard issued me a major misconduct ticket. Granted, this does not bode well for my insistence that I did not aid and abet my codefendant trans sibling.

↑ Public Declaration of Innocence - p3 of 4 ↓

Once released from prison, Steph demonstrates their innocence the longer they go without any other legal trouble. If never being accused of this type of crime by anyone else, either before or after prison, then they reinforce their innocence claim. Anyone arguing that they must be getting away with it all the other times expose their biased motivated reasoning.

7. How many years has it been since the wrongful conviction? **33**

Stretching 33 years since the conviction significantly reinforces the innocence claim. Especially if no other arrests. Unless reoffending and somehow not getting caught.

Such a number can be verified by Steph's public record.

8. Has Steph ever been accused of this type of crime by anyone else? **no, not by anyone**

With no similar allegations, and your innocence is demonstrated by many other complementary factors, the innocence claim has merit.

This understandably can be challenging to verify. Steph explains:

My three daughters were all underage at the time and never accused me of the such things. Nor has anyone other child in my personal company. NOTE: I am actually asexual, so it is ironic that I am on the lifetime sex offender registry.

9. How many years has it been since Steph was released from custody, and not been in trouble with the law again? **21**

Stretching 21 years since re-entering society reinforces the innocence claim.

This number can be verified by Steph's public record.

# ↑ Public Declaration of Innocence - p4 of 4 ↓

If Steph has never been arrested for anything outside of this incident, or received any other convictions, then the longer they go without any legal trouble reinforces their innocence claim. If they are a member of a group or community historically profiled or targeted by law enforcement, this can help explain how they were wrongly pulled into the net this one time.

10. How many times has Steph been arrested besides this incident?

none

If no other arrests, then Steph is most likely innocent. The more years without any arrests or other convictions, Steph is more likely actually innocent of the sole conviction.  
  
This can be verified by Steph's public record.

11. How many other convictions has Steph received?

none

**i** If no other conviction but this disputed one, then claimant is most likely innocent. If no other conviction in 21 years, the onus shifts to those insisting such a person must be guilty. Who themselves may wish to avoid being shamed as 'innocence offenders'.  
  
This can be verified by Steph's public record.

12. Is Steph in a population historically profiled and frequently targeted by law enforcement?

profiled not targeted

Steph might be the victim of law enforcement prejudice. In addition to all the factors above, this can reinforce the innocence claim. Especially if the conviction results from tunnel vision grounded in confirmation bias.  
  
This can understandably be challenging to verify. Steph explains:  
  
I came out as transgender a year before this incident, when the widespread belief that LGBTQ+ people must be child recruiting sex predators, a view shared by some in law enforcement. Even my defense counsel accepted transphobic tropes aimed at my codefendant and trans sibling.

# ↑ Results ↓

The more transparent Steph can be, the more trustworthy their innocence claim.

**Accountability:**

Great! No no one can say you're conniving or trying to hide anything. Let others try to prove you wrong!

**yes, unconditionally**

**Claimant presents an overwhelming pattern of innocence.**

**Steph is**

**demonstrably innocent**

**more innocent than not**

**probably innocent**

**unlikely but maybe innocent**

## LET'S BRING JUSTICE TO THE INNOCENT

### Together, we can do better

At no fault of their own, innocent people depart prison without their full rights. Collateral consequences of wrongful convictions cost them a good job, sustainable housing, and more. Many slip into cycles of poverty. Some fall into addictions to cope. Together, we can turn that around.

### Innocence offending

Each employer relying upon an errant criminal background check becomes complicit. Along with rental leaders, they become privileged "innocence offenders". Even neighbors can become innocence offenders under color of law.

### Expedited exoneration

Legal tests for discerning wrongful convictions of the innocent remain disappointingly inadequate. Legalistic norms like "harmless error" and "conviction finality" needlessly prevents exonerating the innocent. This alternative can serve as a kind of triage to identify cases ripe for exoneration, which can perhaps wait, and which can be overlooked.

### With or without you

This tool exists to complement your efforts to serve the underserved innocent. Or it can empower need-response to compete with your meager, or nonexistent, efforts. We invite you to join our efforts, to help create more just outcomes. But since justice delayed is justice denied, we can't wait forever. Contact us now to learn how need-response can serve you.

**Contact us**