



Harris County DNA: Conviction Integrity by Second Look
Upholding the Rule of Law and Preventing Wrongful Convictions Program
Bureau of Justice Assistance (USDOJ-OJP-BJA)

ABSTRACT. *The Harris County DNA: Conviction Integrity by Second Look* project is a partnership between the Innocence Project of Texas, the Harris County District Attorney’s Office Conviction Integrity Division, and Brass Facts (formerly the Anthony Graves Foundation).

The Texas DNA “Chapter 64” statute, enacted by the Texas Legislature in 2001, provides eligible prisoners access to post-conviction DNA testing to adjudicate claims of actual innocence. The project will re-examine (Second Look) approximately 300 Chapter 64 actual innocence claims between 2001 and 2008 in which DNA testing was denied by Harris County district courts.

The project will investigate whether or not a previously rejected Chapter 64 appellant was in hindsight eligible for DNA testing. Upon a Second Look review, if the appellant’s case is found to have merit, the project will seek to identify and locate evidence, secure testing and provide related post-conviction legal services as may be appropriate in resolving the actual innocence claim.

The project features the “case class” review approach. This approach examines a body of cases with specific characteristics (denied Chapter 64 requests). Apart from every day “jail mail” screening and investigation, case class review is useful to explore particular criminal justice practices (such as crime lab performance). Or, as with this project partnership, achieve greater anticipated case efficiency in identifying wrongful convictions.

From what we learn in the case reviews, the project will seek to contribute to and expand the existing dialog around preventing and responding to wrongful convictions. Areas of focus will explore both pre-conviction and post-conviction prevention subject matter.

PROJECT PERIOD. January 2019 - December 2020

BRASS FACTS/TSU PARTNERSHIP. Brass Facts (Founder Anthony Graves, Executive Director Robert Hoelscher, Case Manager CJ Connelly) is developing a TSU criminal justice partnership through Marcia Johnson and the Urban Research and Resource Center (URRC). The Harris County DNA project is the first collaborative effort under this partnership.