

Editor's Note: KCADP hosted Ray Krone, the 100th wrongfully convicted Death Row inmate, on Feb. 21 at the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law. His speech at Danville's Centre College that night but was canceled due to a sleet storm that blanketed the area. You will be able to hear his talk online at www.law.louisville.edu/adacademics/diversity-forum-series.

Ray Krone told a group of nearly 60 students that he wasn't much different from them. After serving in the Air Force, the Pennsylvania native settled in Phoenix and worked as a letter carrier. Like many young people, he played softball and was part of a dart league at a neighborhood bar.

Life was uncomplicated for the 35-year-old until he was accused of killing Kim Ancona, the bar's night manager, who was found brutally murdered in the men's bathroom. At that point, his words quickened in telling the horror of being interrogated for hours for a crime he knew nothing about. In the beginning, he was very cooperative: Taking off clothing and shoes, giving hair samples and biting into a foam cup to show the pattern of his teeth. Little did he know the victim had been bitten the perpetrator. Again, he was taken downtown for questioning. But when asked to come in for questioning a third time, his patience had evaporated. It didn't matter much – police were convinced they found the right guy.

Krone was arrested. He looked into a "paid" attorney but discovered neither he nor his parents could afford his fees. He wasn't worried with a public defender because he assumed innocence was on his side. Before long, his public defender withdrew and a court-appointed attorney was assigned his case for \$5,000.

Neither innocence nor that lump sum of money for a lawyer was enough to save him from a death sentence in 1992. It took some time for the shock to wear off that he was now part of Arizona's Death Row. For two hours, three days a week he got to be outdoors. Just seeing a plane or a bird flying was a reminder of life outside prison walls. He had to keep telling himself that despite prison life, he wasn't "an animal." His family sent a Bible and he "reunited with my faith."

Meanwhile, he knew he had to legally fight his way out of Death Row. He spent nearly three years on Death Row watching other inmates taken to be executed.

A ray of hope was squashed again after he was granted a new trial and then sentenced to 46 years in prison.

With financial help from an uncle, he hired a defense attorney. Through DNA evidence, he proved the saliva found on the victim's shirt matched another man, who was also imprisoned in Arizona for an unrelated sex crime.

On April 8, 2002, he finally got to trade in his orange jumpsuit for jeans and a T-shirt. His job now is to show that cases like his are shameful and unacceptable. He now serves as director of communication and training for Witness to Innocence, a project of the Moratorium Campaign.

Ray is lucky, in many ways. He was not executed before proving his innocence. He is one of 126 people from 26 states who have been released from Death Row with evidence of their innocence.

Kentucky has its own wrongful convicted named Larry Osborne. He was acquitted also in 2002 at his retrial for the December 1997 murders of an elderly Whitley County couple. He was 17 at the time of his arrest and spent two years on Eddyville's Death Row.

