
WilmerHale Secures Pro Bono Victory With Tankleff's Voided Conviction

2007-12-21

The Appellate Division of State Supreme Court in Brooklyn, New York today overturned the convictions of Martin Tankleff—a Long Island man who has been imprisoned for 17 years for the 1988 murders of his parents. In 1990, Mr. Tankleff was sentenced to 50 years to life in state prison based largely on a false confession that he gave after an unMirandized interrogation.

WilmerHale partner Jennifer M. O'Connor handled several of Mr. Tankleff's appeals beginning in 1998. Among these appeals, Mr. Tankleff's WilmerHale defense team, alongside co-counsel also representing Mr. Tankleff pro bono, briefed and argued his 2007 appeal of the denial of his request for a new trial, which resulted in today's reversal of Mr. Tankleff's conviction. The new trial request was based on the testimony of new witnesses who came forward with evidence that two other men killed Mr. Tankleff's parents.

As noted in the *New York Times* on December 21, 2007, four appellate justices—Reinaldo E. Rivera, Gabriel M. Krausman, Anita R. Florio and Mark C. Dillion—wrote in a unanimous, 21-page decision, “It is abhorrent to our sense of justice and fair play to countenance the possibility that

someone innocent of a crime may be incarcerated or otherwise punished for a crime which he or she did not commit.”

Next steps include securing Mr. Tankleff’s release on bail while the District Attorney considers whether to try the case again.

The WilmerHale team on the case included [Jennifer O’Connor](#), Roberto Gonzalez and [Brent Gurney](#). Other firms involved in this lengthy case include: Baker Botts LLP, Kelley Drye & Warren LLP, Clifford Chance US LLP, and the Law Offices of Bruce A. Barket.