August 28, 2025

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COURT ORDERS NEW TRIAL FOR WRONGFULLY CONVICTED PENNSYLVANIA MAN, IN MAJOR WATERSHED FOR SUBU VEDAM'S QUEST FOR JUSTICE

Forty-Two Years After Vedam Was Sentenced to Life in Prison, Court Finds Former Prosecutor Defrauded Him By Withholding Crucial Evidence Bolstering His Innocence

In a potentially climactic step toward ending the plight of a Pennsylvania man who has spent 42 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit, a Pennsylvania court Thursday ordered a new trial in the case of Subramanyam "Subu" Vedam who was wrongfully convicted of murder in 1983 in connection with the death of a State College resident.

The ruling by Centre County Court of Common Pleas Judge Jonathan D. Grine could culminate in the freedom of 64 year-old Vedam, who, at 22, had his life taken from him when he was sentenced to a term of life without parole for the 1980 death of Thomas Kinser. In finding that the conviction was unwarranted, Grine ruled that the Centre County District Attorney's office and the FBI violated Vedam's constitutional right to a fair trial by concealing critical evidence that could have exonerated him of the crime.

"We're infinitely thankful that the court has upheld the most sacred principle of our justice system in recognizing that Subu was deprived a fair trial, and we're hopeful that this is the precursor to his final exoneration and release from prison," said Zoë Miller-Vedam, Subu Vedam's niece. "The case against Subu, which was always blatantly unfounded, completely crumbles in light of the evidence we now know the prosecutor concealed. A fair trial, where this evidence would finally have its day in court, will unequivocally show that Subu was convicted for a crime he didn't commit. Today's ruling is the first crucial step toward restoring integrity to a justice system that failed not only Subu, but the community that depends on it to fairly investigate crimes and hold the right people accountable. Most importantly it is a testament to Subu's stalwart commitment, in the face of so much unfathomable suffering over the last 42 years, to obtain truth and justice even when the system put so many obstacles in his path. It is also a tribute to the unwavering support of the community members that have stood with our family to remedy a glaring wrong by a justice system that acts in their name."

Grine scheduled a new trial for Vedam for December, pending a decision by Centre County District Attorney Bernie Cantorna on whether to appeal the ruling. Vedam's attorneys urged Cantorna to acquiesce to the court's decision and finally grant their client his constitutionally sacred right to a fair trial 42 years after he was scapegoated for a crime he didn't commit and banished to prison. To appeal the ruling would only perpetuate the deplorable injustice Vedam has suffered, they said.

"We are thrilled that Judge Grine substantiated what we have argued all along—that Subu was wrongfully convicted when prosecutors in his original trial withheld key information and failed to correct false testimony, inflicting 42 years of injustice on him. While this DA's office was not involved in Subu's original prosecution, it has a duty to accept the court's ruling and correct this injustice," Vedam's lead attorney, Gopal Balachandran said. "We urge D.A. Cantorna to end Subu's anguish and begin to remedy the blight on our justice system without delay. We believe it is both the only principled decision that can be made and the only way to salvage the honor of a justice system that has been called into question by this case."

Grine's decision came two years after documents surfaced showing that Gricar had compromised the integrity of his case by concealing an FBI ballistics report that contradicted his claim that Kinser was killed by a .25-caliber bullet linked to a gun purportedly used by Vedam. Instead, the FBI analysis, which Vedam's legal team discovered lurking in thousands of pages of records that Gricar had compiled on the case, found that the dimensions of Kinser's fatal wound were consistent with a .22-caliber weapon. They argued that by neglecting to disclose the report, Gricar unlawfully sabotaged Vedam's ability to defend himself against the spurious murder charge and left him scapegoated for the crime.

Vedam's supporters championed Grine's decision as proof that the wrongfully convicted man's unstinting, decades-long quest for justice is resonating legally, and they expressed hope it represents a bellwether of his ultimate vindication. Vedam's immediate fate now hinges on a pending decision by Centre County District Attorney Bernie Cantorna on whether to appeal Grine's ruling, embark on a retrial of Vedam, or drop charges in light of the ample evidence he was not responsible for Kinser's death.

Vedam's attorneys noted multiple examples of prosecutors elsewhere in the country who have elected to drop charges against people who, like Vedam, were found to be wrongfully convicted due to misconduct by law enforcement.

Vedam's long ordeal began in 1982 when, as a student at Penn State University he was arrested and subsequently charged with Kinser's death. He was wrongfully convicted of the murder in 1983, despite a legally porous case. No eyewitnesses to the crime testified at trial and prosecutors never recovered a .25-caliber gun they alleged that Vedam had used to commit it. It was not until 2023 that Vedam's legal team was permitted to comb through the entire original case file the District Attorney's had compiled in conjunction with Vedam's trial and conviction.

Those records revealed the explosive FBI report that Gricar had concealed, spurring a renewed push to vacate Vedam's wrongful conviction.

At a February hearing Grine conducted to hear new testimony in the case, Dr. Ann Ross, one of the country's leading forensic experts, said that the concealed FBI report contained measurements that should have excluded a .25-caliber bullet fired from a handgun as the cause of Kinser's death.

Meanwhile, Vedam himself has weathered the last four decades of gross injustice with remarkable character, supporters note. Rather rather than succumb to defeatism and withdrawal, Vedam instead resolved to transform his hardship into a resource for common good. While incarcerated at a state penitentiary in Huntingdon, PA, Vedam designed and lead a prison literacy training program; raised money for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program; tutored and mentored hundreds of inmates to help them earn educational diplomas; and earned three university degrees with high honors, himself. In fact, he became the first person in the nearly 150 years of his correctional institution to earn a master's degree while behind bars.