



Some of the most compelling – and effective – advocates for criminal justice reform are crime victims, and the Innocence Project is increasingly working with victims on public education and legislative campaigns to prevent wrongful convictions.

Jennifer Thompson-Cannino and Ann Meng never imagined they would become advocates for remedying the criminal justice system's flaws. In the 1980s, Thompson-Cannino was raped in North Carolina and Meng was raped in a separate crime in Virginia. Both women identified their attackers, testified at the trials and helped secure convictions. Both women then began the difficult journey of rebuilding their lives, only to learn – years later – that they had been wrong. DNA testing exonerated the men who were convicted in both cases.

Today, Thompson-Cannino and Meng are speaking out and working with the Innocence Project to prevent other crime victims from going through what they did.

This fall, Thompson-Cannino testified in front of the Georgia Legislature with Innocence Project Co-Director Barry Scheck. She shared her personal story with legislators and asked them to implement reforms that are proven to make eyewitness identification more accurate. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* described the legislators as “rapt” by her testimony.

Meanwhile, Meng took that message to a much larger audience, with the Innocence Project's help. Her story was the subject of an in-depth feature in the October issue of *O: The Oprah Magazine*. Millions of readers learned about wrongful convictions and eyewitness misidentification from someone to whom they can relate, identify and sympathize. “I take responsibility for my part in what happened,” Meng said, referring to her misidentification of Julius Ruffin as the rapist, which led to his wrongful conviction. “But the criminal justice system failed all of us.”

The Innocence Project's work with Meng and Thompson-Cannino this fall is just part of an increasing effort to work with individual victims and victims' organizations. Over the past two years, the Innocence Project has worked with the Downstate Coalition for Crime Victims in New York on state legislation to prevent wrongful convictions, and Barry Scheck addressed a joint conference of the National Crime Victims Bar Associate and the National Center for Victims of Crime earlier this year.

To read more about the Innocence Project's ongoing and increasing work with crime victims, see the Fall 2007 issue of “Innocence Project in Print” at http://www.innocenceproject.org/Images/831/ip_fall_newsletter_2007.pdf.

The Innocence Project is a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted people through DNA testing and reforming the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice. For more information, go to: www.innocenceproject.org.