

Pruno Fund Speakers Bureau Conversations Series Spotlights Wrongful Convictions

Series Finale Episode Features Activism and Art of Exoneree Fernando Bermudez

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, October 3, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- (LOS ANGELES - October 3, 2022) – While over 3,000 individuals have been exonerated of wrongful convictions since 1989, statistics by the National Registry of Exonerations indicate that between 2%-10% of those in currently in prison are innocent. Headlines in the papers on exonerees don't offer the opportunity to really see or

understand the person behind that [wrongful conviction](#)—what they faced, how they kept their humanity, hope and faith intact while incarcerated--knowing that they were innocent. Nor do they speak to the exoneree's activism. The [Pruno Fund](#), an organization that helps those who have been wrongfully convicted transition from life in prison through emergency grants and

speakers training and paid speaking engagements, has launched a monthly virtual series of [conversations](#) with 10 individuals who have lived through these experiences. The series is hosted by NPR/WBEZ's Natalie Y. Moore beginning Wednesday, June 8, 2022 at 3pm ET/12pm PT and airing the second Wednesday of each month through October 12, 2022.

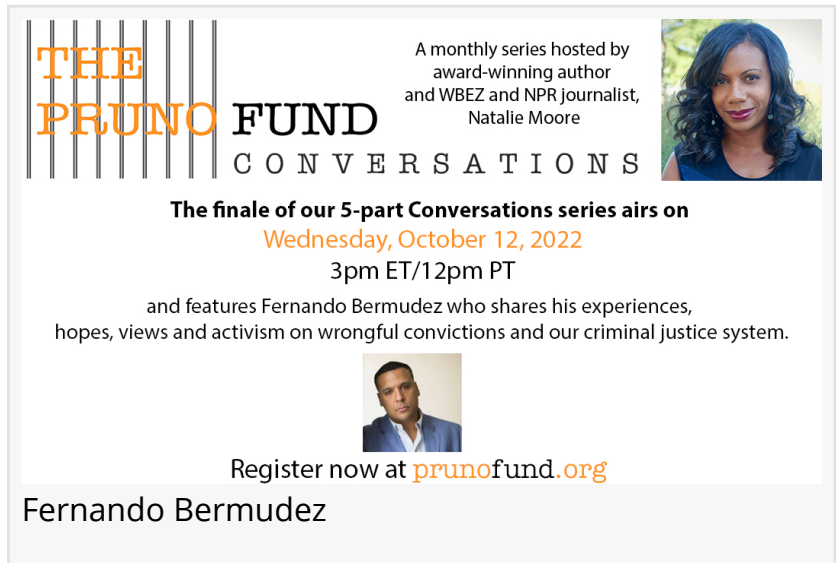
"We created The Pruno Fund Speakers Bureau to not only help our exonerees get paid for telling their stories, but also offer their services to organizations who want to engage and motivate their employees and members," says Nikki D. Pope, Co-Founder. "Despite the harshness of

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Courtney Lance, Pruno Fund Co-Founder

prison and the unfairness of their incarceration, these are people who persevered against nearly insurmountable odds, who remain hopeful and upbeat about what lies ahead for them. Our speakers are ideal in delivering such messages.”




THE PRUNO FUND CONVERSATIONS

A monthly series hosted by award-winning author and WBEZ and NPR journalist, Natalie Moore



The finale of our 5-part Conversations series airs on
Wednesday, October 12, 2022
3pm ET/12pm PT

and features Fernando Bermudez who shares his experiences, hopes, views and activism on wrongful convictions and our criminal justice system.



Register now at prunofund.org

Fernando Bermudez

The Conversations series features compelling interviews with the following individuals, who spent collectively 159 years imprisoned for crimes they did not commit or did not occur:

- Airing October 12th - False accusations and mistaken identity are common threads when sending innocent people to prison. Fernando Bermudez is one such example and those accusations landed Fernando in prison for 10 years for a murder he did not commit.
- Our first conversation, which aired on June 8th, featured Sabrina Butler-Smith, the first woman to be exonerated from Death Row. 18-year-old Sabrina found her 9-month-old baby lifeless. She valiantly tried to resuscitate him. She was arrested for murder the very next day. She was innocent, yet convicted and spent over 6 years in prison, with almost three of them on death row. It is still available to view.
- Our 2nd conversation aired on July 13th: At 17 years old, Eugene Gilyard was convicted of murder due to witness misidentification. He was in prison for 16 years. Misleading forensic evidence by the ATF put Kristine Bunch in prison for murder and arson for 17 years. Ronnie Carmona-Sandoval's son, Arthur, was misidentified in a lineup for armed robbery because of a Lakers cap. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison. This conversation aired on July 13th.
- Our 3rd conversation aired on August 10th- Obie Anthony was arrested and convicted for murder and spent 17 years in prison when he was nowhere near the crime scene. Zavion Johnson was convicted of murdering his own child and spent 16 years in prison.
- Our 4th conversation highlighted Darrell Siggers, who was convicted of murder and spent 34 years in prison. Virginia "Ginny" Lefever was convicted of murdering her husband and was imprisoned for 11 years. George Toca was only 17 when he was convicted of murder and spent 30 years in prison. It aired on September 14th.

Concludes The Pruno Fund Co-Founder, Courtney B. Lance, "The Pruno Fund Conversations is an extraordinary series. I found the extraordinary in the exonerees activism. They are resolute in their desire to change the criminal justice system. They have passed bills, lobbied for legislation and speak, regularly, with lawmakers to help those innocent women and men, still in prison right the wrongs that they've suffered for crimes they did not commit. I also find the extraordinary in their support of each other. There is a definite brother/sister hood that exists among the exoneree population that is considerate and supportive of the needs of the newly exonerated as they re-enter and navigate the unfamiliar world, and of those who are still struggling to prove their innocence. This series will illuminate the public's perception of wrongful conviction, and the characters' of these men and women. This series will shed a light on the fact that what has happened to them can happen to anyone, at any time."

Registration for the Conversations series is \$15 per episode or \$50 for the entire series. Please visit www.prunofund.org to register. Previously aired conversations are available for viewing.

About The Pruno Fund

The Pruno Fund was established to help exonerated men and women succeed in transitioning from prison to life on the outside. The Fund provides grants to. The Pruno Fund also offers a Certification Program, for which any Exoneree interested in public speaking will be able to

register to receive training towards certification.

About The Pruno Project

The Pruno Project published its first book, Pruno, Ramen and a Side of Hope: Stories of Surviving Wrongful Conviction telling the stories of 10 exonerees from three perspectives: the actual case, the exoneree and a loved one. It produced an award-winning audiobook of the same name featuring Whoopi Goldberg and Bill Kurtis as narrators, along with talent such as Ashley Judd, Ricki Lake, Esai Morales, LisaGay Hamilton, Laraine Newman and Richard Steele. Later this year, The Pruno Project will release the 2nd edition of the inspired book, with new cover art by Fernando Bermudez.

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