

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

**Counting today,
I have sat in
prison 3,135
days for a
crime I did not
commit.**

If I don't get a re-trial,
I have 289 years to go.
Six months ago the
'eyewitnesses' who testified
they saw me leaving
a bar in which 3 people had
been killed, admit they
gave false testimony.
Despite this, the judge
who sentenced me won't
give me a re-trial. Why?

**RUBIN HURRICANE CARTER
NO. 45475
TRENTON STATE PRISON**

**When I was
sentenced
to 197 years
in prison,
even my father
felt that if a
jury found me
guilty, then I
must be guilty.**

So I understand when perfect
strangers automatically
assume that I was the killer
of 3 people in a New Jersey
Tavern. Luckily, my father
lived long enough to see
the principal 'eyewitnesses'
against me admit they lied.
Now I'm seeking a re-trial
so I can convince everyone
of my innocence.

**RUBIN HURRICANE CARTER
NO. 45475
TRENTON STATE PRISON**

The documents above are two one-column, three-inch ads on page two of the New York Times bought by George Lois in March 1975, signed by Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, No.45472. Rubin Carter was an American-Canadian middle-weight boxer, born on May 6, 1937, in Clifton, New Jersey.

In 1966, right in the middle of his boxing career, Carter was twice wrongfully accused for murder and imprisoned for nearly two decades.

THE CASE:

On June 17, 1966 at 2:30 in the morning two black men broke into the Lafayette Bar and Grill in Paterson, New Jersey and opened fire killing three people.

Alfred Bello, a notorious criminal assisted to the scene and called the police.

Patricia Graham, a lady who lived right above the bar, saw two black men getting on a white car and disappearing westward.

Carter and his friend Artis happened to be driving nearby on a car which looked like the one described by the witnesses.

The police stopped Carter's car and brought him and Artis to the crime scene.

On searching their car, they found some ammunitions that fit the weapons used by the killers.

Sentenced to life imprisonment, Carter undertook relentless efforts to overturn the conviction. In 1973 he was able to get the help of a lawyer in the New Jersey Public Defender's Office and a free lance journalist, who kept on searching for evidence. In 1974 the attorney, and a reporter for the New York Times tracked down the witnesses, who separately recanted their testimony, claiming they had been pressured into it by the prosecutors.

The New Jersey Supreme Court overturned Carter's and Artis' convictions. After only ninety days of freedom, however, in 1976 the prosecution brought the case to trial again, this time contending that Carter and Artis, who are both African-American, had been motivated by racial vengeance. The murders in the bar had occurred only shortly after an African-American bar owner in Patterson had been killed by a white assailant. One of the witnesses from the original trial took the stand again and recanted his recantation. Carter and Artis were reconvicted and returned to prison.

Although the international attention to the case faded, the lawyers who represented Carter and Artis at the second trial continued to work on their behalf for over ten years eventually unearthing key evidence that the prosecution had suppressed at the second trial. During this period a group of social activists from Canada became interested in Carter's case and established communication with him. The group members provided Carter important emotional, moral, and financial support to continue the struggle to gain his freedom.

In 1985, after nine years of unsuccessful appeals in State court, Carter's attorneys persuaded a federal judge to overturn Carter's and Artis' convictions.

In 1988 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the decision of the federal judge.

CONTENT and CONSIDERATIONS:

The article aims to highlight the reason why an innocent man had to spend over 3100 years in jail for a crime he did not commit, which is strictly related to the racist prejudices widespread in the late 1970's USA.

The inmate can not believe he sat in prison for six more month after the "eyewitnesses" who testified against him admitted they were actually wrong.

In the second column Carter acknowledges that if even his own father would believe he actually was one of the murderers it was impossible that a jury composed by strangers (and most probably white people) would have believed his statements.

He says he is relieved by the fact that his father has lived long enough to hear the eyewitnesses admitting they lied: he is now waiting for the authorities to believe in his innocence too.

This case is just one of many episodes of discrimination clearly based on racism.

Racist beliefs were widely disseminated among both citizens and politicians in the USA when the whole story began: such beliefs led to various unfair sentences against Afro-American people.

Every time one black person seemed to be involved in a crime, most white people would immediately believe he or she was actually guilty.

Even though we are making some important progress (through laws and measures aiming to defeat discrimination), some recent studies show how the race-related composition of a jury often influences the outcome of a trial against a black person.

As far as I am concerned the battle against racism is not over yet: I truly believe such a battle should be fought daily by each one of us.

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