



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. Who is Jarvis Jay Masters?

Jarvis Jay Masters is an innocent man who has spent more than three decades on San Quentin's death row after being wrongfully convicted as an accomplice to murder in 1990. Jarvis became an internationally published author from behind bars with one of his two books—*That Bird Has My Wings*—recently becoming an **Oprah's Book Club pick for September 2022**. Jarvis has also authored *Finding Freedom: How Death Row Broke & Opened My Heart* along with numerous poems, short stories, and op-eds. Jarvis continues to fight for his life, working to prove his innocence and secure exoneration.

### 2. How did Jarvis end up on death row?

A prison guard was murdered in 1985 at California's San Quentin State Prison, where Jarvis was serving time for a series of armed robberies he committed as a teenager. At the time of the murder, Jarvis was locked in his cell in a different tier of the prison but was one of three men convicted for the crime. The man who ordered the crime and the man who committed the murder both received life in prison. Meanwhile, Jarvis received the death sentence for allegedly fashioning the murder weapon, something he did not do.

### 3. Why should I believe Jarvis is innocent?

Another man confessed to the crime, but the jury never heard that evidence, because the prosecution did not disclose the confession to Jarvis' attorneys. Jarvis bore no resemblance to the eyewitness description, but the man who confessed did. The man who ordered the crime and the man who committed the murder both swore Jarvis was not involved. In fact, every witness with firsthand knowledge about the plan to kill the guard now admits that Jarvis was not involved. That evidence was never presented at Jarvis' initial trial and was not disclosed until recently. His federal appeal is the first chance Jarvis has had to present a comprehensive case of his innocence.

### 4. How long has Jarvis been incarcerated?

Jarvis entered San Quentin in 1981 after being convicted for armed robberies he committed as a teenager. Jarvis has long since fully served his time for the robberies but remains condemned to die for a murder he did not commit.

### 5. What has Jarvis done during his time in San Quentin?

Jarvis has built a life of deep meaning and service despite the continued injustice he lives with daily. Jarvis has taken his death row experiences in a 9 ft. by 4 ft. windowless cell at San Quentin and channeled them for good: While in prison, Jarvis became a devout, practicing Buddhist and has mentored other prisoners and corrections officers, as well as educators, youth counselors, and students at both the K-12 and college levels, encouraging them to focus on their education and goals. Through writing, interviews, and actions (including several hunger strikes), Jarvis also works to bring direct attention to the systemic problems with the penal and criminal justice systems.

# FREE JARVIS

THE CAMPAIGN TO EXONERATE JARVIS JAY MASTERS

## 6. What appeals has Jarvis pursued to date? What was the outcome?

Jarvis has appealed his conviction and sentence multiple times. His state habeas corpus appeal took 14 years to be heard by California Supreme Court. In 2011, a special referee appointed by the California Supreme Court acknowledged that false testimony was likely presented at Jarvis' original trial. Yet, the judge dismissed the witness recantations, arguing they lacked credibility. Ironically these witnesses were deemed credible enough for the trial court to sentence Jarvis to death in 1990, but not enough to exonerate him during his habeas appeal to the California Supreme Court. The Court ultimately denied Jarvis' appeals in 2019, despite new evidence that put the original verdict in question.

## 7. What comes next in the legal process for Jarvis?

On August 10, 2022, Jarvis' legal team filed a motion for judgment on the pleadings with the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, requesting a hearing, and for the court to grant Jarvis' federal writ of habeas corpus, filed on November 20, 2020, and to vacate Jarvis' criminal sentence.

## 8. What is the basis for Jarvis' federal appeal?

Jarvis' federal appeal argues that Jarvis is innocent, and that the California Supreme Court infringed on Jarvis' constitutionally protected due process rights and misapplied the law in key questions regarding the case. In particular, it argues that the Court should not have excluded the confessions of two material witnesses, that critical evidence was withheld from Jarvis' defense, that the Court denied relief despite the introduction of evidence prosecutors should have known to be false, and that Jarvis is entitled to habeas relief because he is innocent.

## 9. Where can I learn more about Jarvis and his case?

Visit [www.FreeJarvis.org](http://www.FreeJarvis.org) to learn more about Jarvis, dive deeper into the details of his story, review case materials, and connect with the movement seeking justice for Jarvis.

## 10. How can I get involved?

Read up. Speak out. Share Jarvis' story. Stay informed. Join us. Learn how at [www.freejarvis.org/takeaction](http://www.freejarvis.org/takeaction).

