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✿ (/subscribe/digital/) \$85,000 Settlement in Philadelphia Wrongful Imprisonment Suit

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The City of Philadelphia has agreed to pay \$85,000 to a man who was wrongfully arrested and imprisoned for a year for a crime he didn't commit.

When Eugene Robinson saw his photo in the Week's Most Wanted section of the Philadelphia Daily News on August 4, 2008, he later told reporters that he "broke down and started crying because [he] didn't know what to do."

The caption next to Robinson's photo said he was wanted in connection with the rape of a woman at sword point. Robinson's picture was an old mug shot taken after an earlier arrest for theft; a reward was offered for his capture.

Robinson sought help from state Senator Shirley Kitchen, who told him to turn himself in. He did so, and everyone was sure the matter would be cleared up quickly.

"There was a warrant out for his arrest, and it just wasn't a good idea for him to walk around wanted for such a serious crime," Sen. Kitchen stated. "I thought it was going to be straightened out. I really did..."

It took five months, though, for Philadelphia police to realize Eugene Robinson was not their man. In fact, the only thing Robinson and the real attacker shared in common was the same first name. They had different birth dates and lived at different addresses. Meanwhile, Robinson remained in jail unable to make bond until the charge was dropped in January 2009, then served another 8 months for failure to pay restitution in a different case.

"We knew that the potential suspect's name was Eugene and the initial investigation showed up Eugene Robinson," explained Craig Straw, Philadelphia's Chief Deputy Solicitor. "There was clearly a name and sort of identity issue between this Eugene Robinson and the other guy."

The "other guy" turned out to be a suspect who lived near the rape victim. The police had even

interviewed – and then released – the right suspect. When they obtained a warrant, however, they incorrectly put Eugene Robinson’s photo with it.

Beyond spending a year in jail for an offense he didn’t commit, Robinson lost his plumbing job and his fiancée left him.

Alan Denenberg, Robinson’s attorney who handled the lawsuit against the city, said the police should have recognized their error sooner. “I’m not a detective and I could even figure [it] out,” he noted. The case settled on March 30, 2011. See: Robinson v. Loduca, U.S.D.C. (E.D. Penn.), Case No. 2:10-cv-03877-BMS.

Additional sources: Philadelphia Daily News, www.cnn.com

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Related legal case

Robinson v. Loduca

Year	2011
Cite	U.S.D.C. (E.D. Penn.), Case No. 2:10-cv-03877-BMS
Level	District Court
Conclusion	Settlement
Damages	85,000.00
Injunction Status	N/A