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LOUISIANA MAN IS NATION'S 108th DEATH ROW EXONEREE

Questions of Innocence Continue to Spur Concern Across the Nation

WASHINGTON, DC -- John Thompson is the nation's 108th exonerated death row inmate since 1973, according to an announcement made today by the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC). Thompson was sentenced to death in 1985 following his conviction for a New Orleans murder. Thompson, who has maintained his innocence since his arrest, was released from prison today less than 24 hours after a jury acquitted him at his retrial. Thompson's exoneration and a growing number of events around the nation, including recent developments in Texas and North Carolina, have heightened calls for a halt to executions.

The jury's decision to acquit Thompson is the final chapter in a long fight to prove his innocence. In 1999, just weeks before his scheduled execution, Thompson's attorney discovered crucial blood analysis evidence that undermined information used to influence the jury's decision to send him to death row. After reviewing the new evidence, Judge Patrick Quinlan vacated Thompson's capital sentence and he remained in jail under a sentence of life without parole. In a later appeal to the 4th Circuit Court of Appeal of Louisiana, the court ruled that Thompson was denied his right to testify during his initial trial and found that prosecutors "intentionally hid" the blood analysis evidence that was uncovered by his counsel. At this time, the court ordered a new trial, which featured never-before heard testimony by Thompson himself and statements from the state's key witness at the previous trial, Kevin Freeman, who was an original suspect in the murder. The trial concluded this week with Thompson's acquittal.

"As the number of death row exonerees continues to rise, the risk of fatal error within our system becomes increasingly clear," said Richard C. Dieter, DPIC Executive Director. "This is

further evidence that our system of capital punishment is so seriously flawed that all executions should be stopped."

Thompson is the sixth death row exoneration in 2003, and the sixth exonerated death row inmate to be freed in Louisiana since 1981. His exoneration comes as those who have voiced concern about capital punishment urge immediate action to address flaws within the system and to prevent the likely execution of an innocent inmate. In Texas, shoddy crime lab practices in Houston and Fort Worth have temporary halted testing at both labs, and concerns voiced by legislators in North Carolina led that state's Senate to recently pass a measure that imposes a two-year moratorium on executions while the death penalty is examined. Similar calls for action have been made by editorial writers across the nation and by organizations such as the National Conference of Black Mayors and the Texas League of Women Voters.

For more information about this case, please contact Thompson's attorneys, Robert Glass at (504) 581-7444, Michael Banks at (215) 963-5387, or Gordon Cooney at (215) 963-4806 . To speak with other death penalty experts, please call Nick Trenticosta (504) 864-0700 or Richard Dieter (202) 293-6970.

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