

What Glenn Ford deserved

## **He was exonerated—but the state refused to pay him for his 30 years on death row.**

by [Peter W. Marty](#) in the [October 12, 2016](#) issue



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On November 5, 1983, Isadore Rozeman, a respected jeweler in Shreveport, Louisiana, was killed by a single gunshot to the head. Glenn Ford, who had done some yard work for Rozeman, was apprehended along with three other suspects accused of robbing the store. Ford was the only one to stand trial.

The prosecution secured a first-degree murder conviction and a sentence of death by capitalizing on two inexperienced defense attorneys appointed by the state, an all-white jury, and a presentation of dubious evidence to the jury. Despite his claims of innocence, Ford spent the next 30 years on death row in Louisiana's notorious Angola prison, often in solitary confinement. Not until the Innocence Project intervened on Ford's behalf in 2007 did the wheels of justice begin to turn. With credible evidence suggesting that Ford was not a participant in the murder, a state district judge voided the conviction and ordered Ford released in March 2014.

Penniless and suffering from stage IV lung cancer, Ford sought restitution. Louisiana law provides up to \$330,000 in compensation to wrongly imprisoned people. But state courts managed to repeatedly deny Ford any funds, arguing that he could not prove his innocence in the robbery associated with Rozeman's murder.

The original prosecuting attorney, A. M. “Marty” Stroud III, took to the editorial page of the *Times of Shreveport* to urge the compensation be paid and to apologize to Ford and his family for his role.

“I was 33 years old . . . arrogant, judgmental, narcissistic and very full of myself. I was not as interested in justice as I was in winning,” wrote Stroud. “Glenn Ford deserves every penny owed to him under the compensation statute. This case is another example of the arbitrariness of the death penalty. I now realize, all too painfully, that as a young 33-year-old prosecutor, I was not capable of making a decision that could have led to the killing of another human being.”

Stroud closed his commentary with some reflective shame: “I end with the hope that providence will have more mercy for me than I showed Glenn Ford. But I am also sobered by the realization that I certainly am not deserving of it.”

Compensation laws for the wrongly imprisoned are badly flawed. In many states, including Louisiana, the burden to prove one’s innocence falls on the wrongly convicted, if there is to be restitution at all. In plenty of states without a compensation statute, exonerated prisoners must actually bring lawsuits if they want the government to pay for their wrongful incarceration.

The prosecution-friendly criminal justice system in Louisiana, often appearing more criminal than just, is funded almost entirely off the backs of people brought into the system by law enforcement. One out of every 55 Louisiana citizens is incarcerated. One out of every 26 citizens lives under some sort of correctional supervision.

Given this troubling state of affairs, readers of this issue of the *Century* may not be surprised to learn that when [seven people were asked to name a book they wish their elected officials would read](#), three of the seven independently chose Bryan Stevenson’s *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. We’ll never know if Glenn Ford would recommend this same book to his elected officials in Louisiana. He died 15 months after his release.

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