

## RILWAN ALLOWONLE

### Other Minnesota Exonerations



In the fall of 2006, a 30-year-old female employee at a residential facility for disabled adults in Cottage Grove, Minnesota, accused 50-year-old Rilwan Alowonle, a co-worker, of sexually assaulting her in the workplace.

Alowonle denied the accusation to police and went on trial in Washington County Circuit Court in September 2007.

The victim testified that on August 24, 2006, Alowonle pinned her to a chair, pulled down her jeans and underwear and digitally penetrated her against her will.

Alowonle testified and denied that he had improperly touched the woman in any manner. On September 26, 2007, a jury convicted him of third-degree sexual assault and he was sentenced to 4 years in prison.

After the conviction, Alowonle retained a new lawyer to handle his appeal. The lawyer, Jean Brandl, filed a motion for a new trial claiming that Alowonle's trial lawyer had failed to present evidence favorable to Alowonle.

The motion was denied without a hearing, but in July 2009, the Minnesota Court of Appeals remanded the case to the trial court for a hearing and ordered Alowonle released on bond.

At the hearing in September 2009, Brandl presented witnesses who could have testified that the victim was spending the night at the facility with her supervisor and that just prior to the alleged sexual assault, the supervisor and Alowonle clashed because Alowonle reported the overnight stays which violated policy.

Brandl showed that Alowonle's trial attorney had not prepared for the trial, did not prepare Alowonle for his testimony and failed to investigate the case. Brandl also presented evidence that the night after the alleged assault, a fellow employee observed an interaction between Alowonle and the victim in which the victim was friendly with Alowonle and went alone with him into the basement of the facility. The witness's statement was included in the initial police report, but Alowonle's first attorney failed to call the witness at trial.

The judge vacated Alowonle's conviction and he went to trial a second time in April 2010.

At the trial, Brandl presented the evidence that the first lawyer failed to present, including the retaliation allegation and the testimony of the employee who testified that he saw Alowonle and the victim on August 27, 2006, the day after the alleged attack and both were speaking amiably and acting as if nothing had happened.

On April 15, 2010, the jury acquitted Alowonle.

– Maurice Possley

**Report an error or add more information about this case.**

Posting Date: 3/10/2014

<b>State:</b>	Minnesota
<b>County:</b>	Washington
<b>Most Serious Crime:</b>	Sexual Assault
<b>Additional Convictions:</b>	
<b>Reported Crime Date:</b>	2006
<b>Convicted:</b>	2007
<b>Exonerated:</b>	2010
<b>Sentence:</b>	4 years
<b>Race:</b>	Black
<b>Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Age at the date of reported crime:</b>	50
<b>Contributing Factors:</b>	Perjury or False Accusation, Inadequate Legal Defense
<b>Did DNA evidence contribute to the exoneration?:</b>	No