

An Ohio man who spent 11 years in prison on a murder conviction that was later reversed has won a \$13.2 million verdict in a civil rights lawsuit against the City of Cleveland. A federal jury in the Northern District of Ohio found that two Cleveland detectives fabricated or withheld evidence in the 2000 murder trial of David Ayers.

Ayers was convicted of aggravated murder in the December 17, 1999 beating death of an elderly woman who lived in a high-rise run by the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. Ayers was a resident of the same complex and a security guard for the Housing Authority. Ayers was arrested for the murder in March 2000 and convicted later that year. At all times, Ayers maintained his innocence. The Ohio Innocence Project took up his case in 2008. Thereafter, a state appellate court ordered the trial court to allow DNA testing of a single pubic hair found on the victim's body, the results of which showed the hair did not come from Ayers. Based upon this exculpatory evidence, Ayers was freed in 2011.

In March 2012, Ayers filed suit against the City of Cleveland and three Cleveland detectives. One detective settled with Ayers; Ayers proceeded to trial against the City and other two detectives. Ayers' evidence at trial demonstrated that the detectives conspired with one another to fabricate a confession he never made, coerced a friend of Ayers to lie by saying that Ayers had told him of the murder before Brown's body was discovered, and also gave key information about the crime to Ayers' prison cellmate so he could later testify against Ayers about a "confession" Ayers did not make. This past Friday, the jury returned a verdict in favor of Ayers in the amount of \$13.2 million.