The Importance Of Forensic Science for Justice System

Blood stains, sun glasses and a charger; to the average person these items are completely unrelated but to a forensic scientist these objects can be clues to solving their next case. Forensic scientists help investigations by collecting and analyzing evidence. In recent years, forensic science has been increasing in popularity due to its glamorization by television shows such as NCIS, Bones and Law and Order. Although forensic science is the application of natural science, law and criminology, there are people who don't seem to value its importance and ability to help law enforcement. There needs to be a change in the way we as a country view the forensic science field as a whole, because science is what solves the crime. Forensic science may prove the possibility of a crime, who conducted the crime, or if there is a connection to a crime with the help of physical evidence.

Forensic science is crucial to the justice system, which means it's the backbone of society. Physical evidence is found using science which is then presented in courts to ultimately give the judge a run down on how the specific crime went down. In a case where a weapon is being used, fingerprinting is used to track down the suspect. Evidence is analyzed using "forensic science techniques that are grounded in chemical principles and methods" (American Chemical Society). The reliability of the legal system is dependent on forensic tests that are dependable, factual, and scientifically proven.

Without forensics murder cases could stay unsolved. For example the murder of Jane Britton, on January 7, 1969 in Cambridge Massachusetts. Jane failed to be present for her exam, which cause her boyfriend to look for her. He found her dead in her own apartment struck in the head by a blunt object. Everyone that was close to Jane was ruled out, which caused the case to be unsolved for years. But then in 2012 DNA evidence from the crime scene was tested once again and matched a serial murderer who had been convicted in 1973. The case officially was solved closed November 2018, by Middlesex District Attorney. "This year as a result of numerous forensic tests on DNA samples collected from the time and those collected more recently, we were able to identify Micheal Sumpter as the murderer" (Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan). Due to the recent technological advancements in the forensic science field, investigators were able to crack a unsolved murder and sexual assult case.

Not only can it help solve unsolved cases but it could help those who were wrongly convicted. Forensic science can help prevent false accusations by presenting scientifically correct evidence before people fall into the spiral of injustice. The innocence project is a non-profit legal organization that advocates against those who are wrongfully acquitted. "The Innocence Project, founded in 1992 by Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck at Cardozo School of Law, exonerates the wrongly convicted through DNA testing and reforms the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice. (Innocence Project) Malcolm Bryant is one of the many people were wrongfully convicted of crimes they did not commit. The case involves 16-year-old Toni Bullock and her 17-year-old friend, Tyeisha, who were approached by a man holding a knife. He dragged the two girls to parking lot and proceeded to stab Bullock to death, but Powll escaped. Powell the description of a man to a sketch artist the best she could. A friend of Bullocks family claimed to have seen a man who fit the exact descriptions, the man was Malcolm Bryant. "Police presented a photographic lineup to Powell, who identified Bryant as the man who

attacked her and Bullock.” (The National Registry of Exonerations) On August 5, 1999, Bryant convicted of first-degree murder and illegal use of a weapon and was sentenced to life in prison for a crime he did not commit. In 2009 the Innocence project filed a petition for DNA testing to be used in Bryants case, which sparked a reinvestigation in 2011. “Fingernail clippings taken from Bullock were sent for testing. The testing revealed a partial DNA profile of a male, which had a rare identifier, which Bryant did not have.” This evidence was key to prove Bryant’s innocence. Forensic science can truly help the lives of those who were misjudged.

Although forensics can help those who were wrongly accused over the years errors have been found. There are two types of errors that exist, “practical and theoretical errors. Practical errors are caused in the rendering of forensic testimony while theoretical errors are errors caused by invalidated science principles and methods and errors in applying these principles and methods.” (Mingxiao Du) The misapplication of forensic science contributed to 45% of wrongful convictions within the U.S. proved through DNA analysis. The most common mistakes are found in hair comparisons. “Microscopic hair analysis involves comparing hair found at a crime scene with the hair of the defendant. A 2009 National Academy of Sciences report stated that microscopic hair comparisons could not be used to match hair with a specific individual.” (Innocence Project)

The forensics field faced major backlash due the 2009 National Academies report; “Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward.” In the report, it “provides a detailed plan for addressing these needs and suggests the creation of a new government entity, the National Institute of Forensic Science, to establish and enforce standards within the forensic science community.” This article makes a call to action; the forensic science system has serious problems that can only be solved by the help of a nation wide commitment that will support the forensic science community in this country. This can only be achieved with the support from the highest levels of both federal and state legislatures. Forensic scientists need to stick together in their respective states to show government officials that this science can help with any public or private related issue.