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For Immediate Release: DA's Conviction Integrity Unit Obtains Ruling of Actual Innocence for Man Who Spent Nearly 17 Years in Prison

(Dallas, Texas) – An official ruling of “Actual Innocence” by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals was made final today, for 39 year-old Quintin Lee Alonzo. On May 30, 2018, Alonzo was declared actually innocent of murder and aggravated assault charges by the trial court and set free on bond upon the agreement of the Conviction Integrity Unit of the Criminal District Attorney's Office. Today's ruling by the State's highest criminal court will allow him to begin taking steps to clear his name and receive the compensation due him for his wrongful conviction.

In February 2003, Alonzo was convicted of murder and two counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. He was sentenced to life in prison for the 2001 slaying of 18-year-old Santos Gauna and fifteen years' in prison for the shooting of Gauna's parents.

Gauna was gunned down, and his parents injured, after a fight broke out on June 9, 2001 at a party to celebrate his high school graduation and enlistment into the United States Marine Corps. Police originally suspected another man, Licho Escamilla, as the shooter; but a witness identified Alonzo as the killer from a photo lineup.

Escamilla absconded from the country after the shooting and remained free. However, he returned to Dallas and struck again in November 2001, when he killed 26-year-old Michael Torres in West Dallas. In addition—several weeks later, he murdered 34-year-old Dallas Police Officer Christopher Kevin James who was working an off-duty security job at a local nightclub.

Licho Escamilla was eventually charged with the capital murder of Officer James and sentenced to death. “The day before Escamilla's execution in 2015, he confessed to the Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) of the Criminal District Attorney's Office to murdering Santos Gauna and shooting his parents. The CIU independently set out on an exhaustive

investigation to corroborate his confession,” said CIU Chief Cynthia Garza. “That thorough investigation led to the recommendation that Alonzo’s case be vacated on actual innocence grounds,” Garza added.

This is the first major actual innocence exoneration case for the CIU in Dallas County, and Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot, since that of Steven Mark Chaney who was free after serving 25 years for a conviction based on a bite mark evidence. “I am extremely proud of the work the CIU is doing and when another individual is exonerated like this, it means we are doing the right thing in pursuing justice for everyone, including rectifying wrongful convictions,” said DA John Creuzot.

Alonzo’s case also marks the 41st exoneration for the Dallas County Criminal District Attorney’s Office since 2001.