

More suspects point fingers at dog-scent lineups

By [LESLIE WILBER](#) •

Originally published September 25, 2009 at 5:33 p.m., updated September 25, 2009 at 10:25 p.m.

READ THE REPORT

To read the full report released by the Innocence Project of Texas on Monday, visit innocenceprojectoftexas.org and click on their current cases.

Tales of faulty arrests based on scent lineups are stacking up since a report condemning the technique was released Monday.

"I expect that we'll see more," Natalie Roetzel, executive director of the Innocence Project of Texas, said Friday. The group released a report Monday that called scent lineups - in particular those conducted by Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Deputy Keith Pikett - junk science.

On Wednesday, prosecutors dismissed a case against 26-year-old Jamal Miller. Miller was accused in a 2008 bank robbery, based entirely on scent evidence, said his lawyer, Damiane Curvey Banieh.

Prosecutors had video of the robbery, Banieh said, and her client looked nothing like the man in the tape. Miller was 70 pounds thinner and had darker skin than the man in the tape, Banieh said.

Most notably, though, Miller was clean-shaven because he worked at a plant and federal safety regulations prohibited facial hair, Banieh said. The man in the video had a goatee and mustache.

"It's amazing how bull-headed they were once they had the scent lineup," Banieh said.

Harris County prosecutor Angela Welton said the case was dismissed because of lack of evidence.

"Scent evidence was one piece of evidence that was looked at," she said.

Roetzel said her group, which works to free the falsely convicted, was also contacted by Ronald Curtis this week. The 39-year-old Houston man said he spent a year in prison for a crop of 2007 burglaries he did not commit.

"That was a year of my life wasted," he said. "I lost my car. I lost my job. My credit was ruined."

Again, the results of a scent lineup accounted for most of the evidence against Curtis. A video from the crimes clearly showed Curtis was not the burglar, he said.

"These people do not care if you are innocent or not," Curtis said. "They just want to throw you in jail for anything."

Randy Morse represents Pikett, who conducted the lineup in each of these cases. Morse has advised his client not to grant interviews because he already is the subject of two lawsuits alleging civil rights violations in federal court in Victoria.

But Pikett has performed scent lineups for 20 years and stands by his technique, Morse said.

Banieh said she is concerned the use of scent lineups will result in other wrongful accusation as happened to her client.

"We have people sitting in jail right now, and they may or may not have done a thing," she said.