

It's time to...

# Free Gary Tyler!

"IF THERE IS ANY STRENGTH THAT I HAVE LEFT,  
I WILL DO WHATEVER I CAN TO HELP FREE THIS YOUNG BROTHER."  
-CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER ROSA PARKS, AT A 1976 RALLY TO FREE GARY TYLER

**Gary Tyler has spent 32 years in jail for a crime that he did not commit.** He is, according to Amnesty International, a U.S. political prisoner.

In 1975, Gary, an African American teenager, was wrongly convicted by an all-white jury for the murder of Timothy Weber, a 13-year-old white youth. Weber was killed in 1974 during an attack by a racist white mob on a school bus filled with African American high school students in Destrehan, Louisiana. Police looked for a scapegoat and found Gary--one of the students.

Gary, whose only crime was wanting to go to an integrated high school, has been in jail since October 7, 1974. His case is one of worst examples of Jim Crow

justice in modern history.

Tyler's trial was characterized by coerced testimony, planted evidence, judicial misconduct and an incompetent defense. He was sentenced to death by electrocution at the age of 17—making him the youngest person on death row at the time. When the Louisiana death penalty was later ruled unconstitutional, Gary's death sentence was lifted—but that did not end the injustice. Gary was resentenced to life in prison. Although his case attracted the support of prominent activists, including Rosa Parks and Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, Gary has remained imprisoned in Louisiana's infamous Angola prison to this day.

## WHY IS GARY TYLER STILL IN PRISON ?

### RACISM

Gary, a Black teen, was convicted and sentenced to death by an all-white jury. The KKK openly targeted Gary during his trial.

Gary maintains that he was beaten by police. One of the main officers involved in the case, Deputy Sheriff V.J. St. Pierre, was a relative of the victim—and, according to Gary, beat him, demanding "Nigger, you're going to tell me something."

### FRAMED BY POLICE

Natalie Blanks, the main witness against Gary, later recanted, saying that she had been coerced into testifying after being assaulted by police and threatened into signing a false statement.

Larry Dabney, who shared a seat on the bus with Gary, said later in an affidavit that police visited him late at night to tell him what to say against Gary. "They didn't even ask me what I saw," Dabney said. "They told me flat out that I was going to be their witness...I didn't see Gary or anybody else in that bus with a gun."

### THE "EVIDENCE"

The gun supposedly used in the killing was a .45 automatic that had no finger prints on it. The bullet that supposedly came from the gun



was never tested to see if it had passed through a human body.

The alleged murder weapon was found stuffed into a slit in a bulging seat on a bus—but it was supposedly discovered only after police had already twice searched the bus. The gun was later discovered to have been "stolen" from an indoor firing range mainly used by police.

Gary's gloves allegedly showed traces of gunpowder—but no independent testing was ever done, because Herman Parrish, the head of the criminalistics lab had supposedly used up all of the residue. Parrish resigned his position two years later, after being accused of lying about test results in another case.

### DENIED A FAIR TRIAL

Gary was a victim of incompetent counsel. His lawyer met with him for just one hour before trial. Judge Ruche Marino--allegedly a former member of the White Citizens Council of Louisiana (the suit-and-tie version of the KKK)--was biased in favor of the prosecution during trial. It took the jury just three hours to find Gary guilty.

On appeal of his conviction in 1981, a federal appeals court admitted that Gary was "denied a fundamentally fair trial," but refused to order a new one.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP WIN JUSTICE FOR GARY TYLER:

- Sign and circulate the petition to free Gary Tyler (available on-line at [www.FreeGaryTyler.com](http://www.FreeGaryTyler.com)).
- Call or write Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco to demand a pardon: Office of the Governor, PO Box 94004, Baton Rouge, LA, 70804-9004; (866) 366-1121; [www.gov.state.la.us](http://www.gov.state.la.us)
- Start a Free Gary Tyler committee on your campus or in your community.

**For resources and information about how you can get involved, visit the Free Gary Tyler Web site at [www.FreeGaryTyler.com](http://www.FreeGaryTyler.com), or e-mail [info@freegarytyler.com](mailto:info@freegarytyler.com)**