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Exclusive: Former Death Row Inmate Out Of Jail

ThePiedmontChannel.com

A one-time death row inmate is out of jail and is speaking out about the murder he said he didn't commit. **Use the comments field below to share your thoughts on this story. We may read your comments on air.**

Rex Dean Penland, 47, spent almost 15 years in jail after a Stokes County jury convicted him in the 1992 rape and slaying of Vernice Alford of Winston-Salem.

Penland's sentence was overturned two years ago, and a judge ordered a new trial. Penland's attorneys argued that his DNA wasn't a match.

Last week, a deal was struck that essentially sentenced Penland to time already served.

Penland told WXII 12's Margaret Johnson he had "no part" in Alford's slaying. He said he is deeply sorry for the family's loss.

"I did not kill her. I swear, I did not," he said.

Authorities who investigated the incident are upset about Penland's release.

"To me, he didn't use the system to prove his innocence," said Stokes County Sheriff Mike Joyce. "He used the system to strike a better deal. Vernice Alford doesn't get a better deal. Her family can't get a better deal."

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