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A Missing Underscore Sent Innocent Man To Prison For 18 Months

(arstechnica.com)

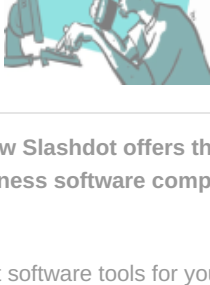


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Posted by **BeauHD** on Monday July 27, 2026 @11:30PM from the copy-paste-incarcerate dept.

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An anonymous reader quotes a report from Ars Technica:

One missing underscore in a Skyrim-themed username [put an innocent Nova Scotia man in prison for 18 months](#). A 2018 child-luring investigation, which began in Madison, Wisconsin, and eventually extended to Halifax, Canada, was based on a false premise. Police were looking for a man using the Kik messaging service under the name "fus__ro_dah" (two underscores after "fus"), but they accidentally requested records for the username "fus_ro_dah" (one underscore after "fus"). This one-character difference led them not to the perpetrator but to a Canadian man named Brandon Klayme. (Ars readers may recognize "fus ro dah" as the [Unrelenting Force "dragon shout"](#) from The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim.)

Despite finding no evidence of the crime on his digital devices, Canadian police [arrested Klayme in 2020](#) on child sex abuse charges. He was convicted after a trial in 2023 and sentenced in 2024 to 18 months in prison. He served the full term. Even after release, Klayme continued to fight his conviction. In the process of preparing his appeal, the username mistake that led to all these years of disruption was finally discovered. On Thursday, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal [overturned Klayme's conviction](#), writing: "Mr. Klayme is factually innocent of the offences. He should never have been charged, let alone convicted." [...] As the court puts it, "Although the information about the usernames was available at the time of the trial, there is no evidence confirming or explaining how it went unnoticed."

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A Missing Underscore Sent Innocent Man To Prison For 18 Months

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[Life imitating art?](#) (Score:2)

Wow. As horrible as this story is, it can't be denied that this man is a modern-day Buttle.

Re: If we're going to go with life imitating art, my first thought was "What, was this guy tried in a Cardassian court?"The sad reality is

Re:Life imitating art? (Score:4, Informative)

by phantomfive (622387) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @01:39AM (#66260098) Journal

In Canada [you have no right to remain silent](#) [mpllp.com].

The lawyer probably asked the guy, "Is this your account?" and he answered, "Yes" and that was the end of it. The jury and judge (and possibly even the defense lawyer) would assume he sent the messages.

This shows why the right to remain silent is so important. Hooray for the fifth amendment.

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Re: Life imitating art? The US 5th amendment is irrelevant to this Canadian case. All free countries have similar legislation that

Re: Life imitating art? Kafka's The Trial.

This ladies and gentlemen (Score:5, Insightful)

by rsilvergun (571051) on Monday July 27, 2026 @11:38PM (#66260028)

is why I oppose the death penalty. Flimsy evidence convictions are extremely common.

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Re: Cool story, but this wasn't about the death penalty.

Re:This ladies and gentlemen (Score:5, Insightful)

by TuringTest (533084) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @02:08AM (#66260114) Journal

Cool story, but this wasn't about the death penalty.

Every story about a wrong conviction is a story about the death penalty

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Re:This ladies and gentlemen (Score:4, Insightful)

by thegarbz (1787294) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @05:46AM (#66260284)

That is the most politically saturated comment I've read on Slashdot in years. It completely ignores factual reality in order to push a specific agenda.

It does not. Courts make mistakes across all grades of crimes from the mundane to the most severe. Innocent people have been executed. Innocent people have been issued parking tickets. Guilty people have gotten away with everything from murder to j-walking.

Not being opposed to a punishment which cannot be rescinded is morally bankrupt and has FUCK ALL TO DO WITH POLITICS.

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Re: Being raped in prison for decades can't be rescinded. The problem is not the punishment, it's the corrupt courts

Re: Refusing to grant victims of heinous crimes the peace of knowing they are forever beyond the reach of the

Re: Do you have something factual to write, or are you just spreading your emotion?

Re: Just one good reason out of many good reasons to oppose the death penalty.

Re: This ladies and gentlemen Another is that it makes the victims complicit in taking another persons life. A victim that may realize

Re: Mob justice is often applied when they go in for this crime. Much like a death penalty.

Re:This ladies and gentlemen (Score:4, Interesting)

by sg_oneill (159032) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @03:39AM (#66260168)

Yeah. I worked in the courts for 3-4 years around '99-'03 and it was eye-opening how.... random... jury convictions really are. The judge I worked under estimated that around a third of those found guilty where probably innocent and a third found innocent probably did it, and that matched my gut feeling. You kind of get a feel for who gets convicted vs who is actually guilty. But none of that really stands up to scientific scrutiny, cos gut feelings..... What did seem clear is that what makes a difference is how well you scrub up in front of a jury and how expensive your lawyer is. Juries just have no experience or instinct for it.

You couldn't possibly want THAT to be the system that decides life and death, especially when the topic is something as emotionally charged as murder. Its enough to give one chills the thought that you end up on the wrong side of a vindictive cop or prosecutor, and that cop or prosecutor decides your going to die and fudges the evidence to put a rope around your neck, because thats probably a story thats as old as humans putting ropes around each others necks.

I don't think "anybody" should feel safe living in a world where your government is allowed to kill you. Its the literal opposite of free.

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Re: If plenty of

Re: This ladies

Re: Why is the

Re: We should re

Re: This ladies

Re: Well, w

Re: Judicious

Re: and the ju

Re: I for one app

Compensation? (Score:4, Informative)

by CRC'99 (96526) on

One would hope that

It's one thing to just v

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Re:Compensation

by misnohmer (163

Perhaps one good

to 18 months in the

charge on their c

up their offer, in w

same jail.

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Re: Compens

Re: The problems that in our current hellscape civilization, just the accusation destroys someone, and there is usually no

Re: Compensation? Victim shaming is not ok

Re: The Duke Laccross accusation was made the same year, not 30 years later.The problem with the Duke case was that DNA

Re: Sentence for what crime? One crime postulated abusing kids, the other was a typographical mistake that not only the prosecution,

Re: A million dollars after taxes (if any) and legal fees is a good start. Add more if he has to fight for compensation. It's more than 18

Re: Yep - and the taxpayers will pay millions, and the idiots responsible continue in their jobs.

Hopefully he sues for a few million. (Score:4, Insightful)

by Kernel Kurtz (182424) on Monday July 27, 2026 @11:39PM (#66260032)

Pity his compensation can't come out of police and prosecutor pensions.

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Re: Hopefully he sues for a few million. Police made a mistake, it sucks but they're humans, mistakes are bound to happen. As much

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Re: I get that a typo can easily happen, but how was this not caught prior to ruining a man's life and reputation especially with no other

Re: Hopefully he sues for a few million. (Score:4, Insightful)

by migos (10321981) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @02:05AM (#66260108)

"Despite finding no evidence of the crime on his digital devices" I would say that's pretty reckless

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Dreyfuss argument See, if he wasn't guilty, he wouldn't have needed to get rid of even circumstantial evidence.(An actual

Re: No. You're making assumptions based on one line. He wasn't prosecuted based on data on his devices, so not finding

Re: Hopefully he sues for a few million. When you have the power to take away people's freedom, there's one direction in which you

Re: Do you want to be a judge for mediocre pay and the chance to go to prison for following the rules that are set forth for you to

Re: Hopefully he sues for a few million. Police made a mistake, but they don't have nearly as much incentive to get it right as they

Re: The problem is not the typo, but that they seem to have sentenced him on a chatlog alone.

He can sue and win The problem is collecting. You would think being the government that would be easy but...

Re: Afroman was denied compensation, but at least he was able to humiliate the police and make some money off it. Most people

Re: The end of your comment was slightly cut off on my screen, and here is in its seriousness how I read it:

Re: Given he himself and his own legal team failed to notice the error, I think you're posting emotionally and not logically. The defence in

Already a problem regardless of underscore count (Score:5, Insightful)

by toutankh (1544253) on Monday July 27, 2026 @11:40PM (#66260034)

Regardless of underscore count, this is a real issue:

Despite finding no evidence of the crime on his digital devices, Canadian police arrested Klayme in 2020 on child sex abuse charges. He was convicted after a trial in 2023 and sentenced in 2024 to 18 months in prison.

So they just assumed he must be the guy despite having no evidence that he was the guy, then sent him to jail, essentially ruining his life. Shouldn't this have been a big issue already then? Shouldn't there be consequences for the person(s) who made that judgement?

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Re: Could have had a really bad or incompetent lawyer, or a completely brain dead jury. Tragic either way.

Re: This s "news for nerds" .. The lesson is ... Isn't there a professional judge involved? There should be one, and they

Re: Already a problem regardless of underscore co There was a judge involved, and the evidence was there. Just the link to

Re: "evidence by the police, and the judge trusted it" ... That is a whole 'nother crime, right there!

Re: Already a problem regardless of underscore c I disagree. The accused's computer was searched and nothing was

Re: One should assume he wouldn't even need a defense with a competent judge, who recognizes that there is nothing but a chatlog

Re: Already a problem regardless of underscore cou Probably some Epstein class hacker who picked his name in the first place.

Re: Do you want to be a judge for mediocre pay and the chance to go to prison for following the rules that are set forth for you to

Re: Already a problem regardless of underscore cou Are you saying that judges should have great power but without great

Re: Yes, I'm saying if they follow the processes PROSCRIBE BY SOCIETY that they shouldn't be sent to jail.Step 1: engage your

Re: Certainly they could be sent to jail in that case. Because you don't know what "proscribe" means. Here's a hint: proscribed;

Re: when you drop all pretext of argument the topic and instead argue a misspelling you've lost. BAD.

Re: Which conveniently brings this thread back to the story.

Re: Already a problem regardless of underscore co Society does not say to convict without evidence, so I'm not sure what

Re: No. The real issue is the double underscore. If double underscore had not been allowed in the username, this mistake would have

Re: Already a problem regardless of underscore cou Especially in cases involving tech, it is important to have full access to

Re: You've had plenty of evidence he was the guy. He didn't even deny having that username. Not having a murder weapon doesn't

Re: Even if the usernames did match, there would not be remotely enough evidence for a conviction. Proof in criminal cases is

Re: Already a problem regardless of underscore cou Plus it never even occurred to the police or the prosecutors that they may have

Re: Before I create a misunderstanding: I find that guy's conviction horrible, and the system clearly failed him hard. He lost money,

[are they going to take him off the registry?](#) (Score:2) are they going to take him off the registry?

Re: Nope. It's for life.

Insane (Score:3)

by backslashdot (95548) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @12:43AM (#66260074)

This would be an insane thing to endure. The prosecution and everyone involved in this should go to jail

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Re: You know, if this was the cost of screwing up this royally, we'd probably see a little more care.What this guy probably endured in

Re: Insane There needs to be accountability, but there almost never is.The police and prosecution tend to get consequences casually

Re: Given the light of this evidence would lead to instant dismissal, it would only be right to also jail the defence lawyer and the victim in

Went to Prison as a Reviled Child Sex Criminal (Score:5, Informative)

by hutkeep (10503251) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @01:29AM (#66260088)

One of the worst things is he didn't just go to prison for anything (drugs, robbery, assault), but as a reviled 'chester'. Those guys are isolated and hated by the rest of the prison population, and the first to get attacked, harassed, and abused themselves. Often times they are put in special isolation to protect them, but just as often, they are not. This wasn't a "regular" prison visit for this guy.

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Missing underscore didn't do shit! (Score:4, Insightful)

by T34L (10503334) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @01:35AM (#66260092)

A careless, cynical and unfair judicial system and its shocking miscarriage of justice sent this guy to prison. Whoever gave that article that headline should be ashamed of themselves.

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insane (Score:1)

Literally no evidence except fake evidence presented by the state. Which obviously would not corroborate to anything (IP Evidence not required) (Score:3)

by Ossifier (703813) on Tuesday July 28, 2026 @02:12AM (#66260120)

For charges of terrorism and child sexual anything, prosecutors know that they do not need to present any factual evidence. There mere accusation is enough to convict.

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Re: Except they had evidence, it just happened to be linked to the perpetrator incorrectly.

This s "news for nerds" .. The lesson is ... (Score:2) A machine can tell the difference between one and two underscores. Whether a **Re: This s "news for nerds" .. The lesson is ...** IEC-61131-3 does not permit ____

Re: They probably failed to do basic due diligence. That would have included comparison via code of the username and search whether **Yikes! (Score:1)** And in that "nazi", right-wing, authoritarian enclave of ... (blinks) ... Canada?

Re: No they all humans can do things wrong. Liberal govts can and do wrongfully convict people. Although this case seems

Re: You find grossly incompetent people that are full of themselves everywhere. Even in Canada.

How? (Score:2) How can he have been convicted when there was absolutely no evidence?

Re: The prosecutors wanted him convicted, the police wanted him convicted, Parents wanted him convicted.

Re: Yes. And nobody was even remotely careful to make sure they have the right person. That makes them the problem here. Also, did

The reality (Score:2) I'm not certain how it is in the great White North, but here Prosecutors are elected, and the metric is that they must do

Wrong font (Score:2) This is a great argument for court docs to be printed in courier. 2 underscores would be apparent pretty quickly.

1 hidden comment

Horrifying (Score:2) Imagine what this would do to you mentally. You've never done what you were accused of, but you're found guilty

Criminal negligence in the justice system (Score:2) Seriously, how completely incompetent do you have to be to send somebody to prison

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