

Freed inmates sue police officers

By Steve Mills
Tribune staff reporter

Two men who went to prison as teens and emerged 27 years later after DNA exonerated them of the 1976 rape and murder of a 9-year-old girl sued more than a dozen current and former Chicago police officers on Monday, saying that the officers framed them to solve the high-profile crime.

Michael Evans and Paul Terry, both now 45, filed separate suits in U.S. District Court in Chicago, saying that detectives on the South Side framed them for the January 1976 rape and murder of Lisa Cabassa.

Police theorized that Lisa was abducted as she walked near her home one evening. Her body was found in an alley 2 miles away the next day.

Evans and Terry both were 17 when they were convicted and sentenced to 200 to 400 years in prison, largely based on the account of Judith Januszewski, a



Jon Loevy (center) announces the wrongful conviction lawsuit filed Monday on behalf of his client Michael Evans (left) and Evans' former co-defendant Paul Terry, who were imprisoned for 27 years.

Tribune photo by Nancy Stone

neighborhood woman who claimed she witnessed Lisa's abduction.

But Januszewski admitted she repeatedly lied to police, and her account was riddled with inconsistencies. Lawyers for Evans and Terry say that police held Januszewski against her will and pressured her to incriminate the two.

"Police manufactured evidence. They concealed exculpatory evidence. They coerced

witnesses. . . They were endeavoring hard to make the evidence fit their theory," said Jon Loevy, Evans' attorney.

A Chicago Law Department spokeswoman said city attorneys had no comment because they had not seen the lawsuit. A spokesman said Police Department officials do not comment on pending lawsuits.

DNA tests performed over the last two years excluded Evans and Terry, as well as several oth-

er men police once considered suspects, as the source of semen found on Lisa's body, and eventually unraveled the case.

Evans and Terry were freed in May 2003, and their convictions were later vacated. Both are seeking pardons from Gov. Rod Blagojevich based on their innocence. Evans now works part time at a fast-food restaurant. Terry, who fell into a deep depression in prison, struggles with psychological problems.