In October 2003, Griffith University welcomed Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter to Australia, and conferred on him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his contribution to civil rights and social justice throughout the world and for choosing life and humanity over defeat and bitterness. Rubin Carter spent twenty years wrongly imprisoned for a brutal murder he did not commit. Narrowly escaping the death penalty, he never ceased to maintain his innocence and after a twenty-two year battle, was finally exonerated. Since his release Mr Carter has tirelessly devoted his time to helping others wrongly convicted around the world, particularly through his role as Executive Director of the Association in Defence of the Wrongly Convicted, based in Toronto, Canada.

The Degree of Doctor of the University was conferred at a special degree ceremony and celebratory dinner on 9 October 2003. Mr Carter then delivered an articulate and stirring speech on using the law as an ally, a surprising topic for someone with his experience. He poignantly reminded all those in the room of the power of law and the great danger of its potential abuse.

Other memorable moments of the evening included a video congratulation from Denzel Washington, who portrayed Rubin in the movie, 'Hurricane', and a moving tribute from his long-time friend, Sam Leslie who met Rubin while in prison where Sam was also wrongly convicted and eventually exonerated.

Mr Carter also made a personal visit to the Innocence Project students on the Gold Coast campus to discuss the work of the Project (and to sign many autographs!). In addition, Mr Carter delivered a free public lecture to approximately 3,500 people at the Brisbane Convention Centre. Mr Carter recalled his time in prison, 10 years of which was spent in solitary confinement in a tiny, dark, cement cell for his refusal to act 'guilty'. He spoke of the hate he experienced in prison, and of the journey to love that set him free. He encouraged everyone to 'dare to dream'.

The lecture also provided a special moment when Mr Carter personally bestowed the Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter Award for Social Justice to its first joint recipients, recent law graduates William Powell and Jennifer Clark. This award is made annually to a Law student who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to social justice.

The visit by Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter was a particularly memorable event for the Innocence Project, whose work he continues to inspire for those wrongly convicted in this country.