

RAMOS, Juan (H/M)
DC# 088561
DOB: 07/12/57

Eighteenth Judicial Circuit, Brevard County, Case # 82-1321
Sentencing Judge: The Honorable J. William Woodson
Trial Attorneys: Norman Wolfinger & Arthur Kutsche, Assistant Public Defenders
Direct Appeal Attorney: Michael S. Becker, Assistant Public Defender

Date of Offense: 04/23/82
Date of Sentence: 03/10/83

Circumstances of Offense:

Mary Sue Cobb was found dead in her bedroom at 1:30 p.m. on 04/23/82. She had multiple knife wounds and had a butcher knife protruding from her chest. Forensic evidence indicated that the victim had been strangled and sexually assaulted.

At the time of the murder, Juan Ramos was employed at a manufacturing firm near the victim's residence. Ramos stated that on the day of the murder, he arrived at work before 7:00 a.m., found out that he had been laid off, and returned to his apartment at 7:10 a.m. He testified that as he returned home from work, he noticed a black man walking in the street near the victim's home.

Ramos was interrogated for approximately seven hours in an interrogation room of the Cocoa Police Department. On the next day, the same room was used for two dog scent discrimination lineups, where the only people present were the police chief, a police detective, a sergeant from the sheriff's office, and the dog handler. The first lineup consisted of five blue shirts, four which belonged to the husband of the police chief's secretary and one which was worn by the victim when she was killed. The dog was given a cigarette pack that belonged to Ramos and was allowed to sniff each shirt in turn. The dog indicated that shirt #5, the one belonging to the victim, was the shirt in question. On a second pass, the dog again indicated that shirt #5 was the shirt in question. The second lineup consisted of five knives, three which belonged to a local diner, one which belonged to a police officer, and one that was imbedded in the victim's body. The dog again sniffed the cigarette pack, and selected knife #3, the knife found in the victim as the knife in question. On a second pass, the dog again indicated that knife #3 was the knife in question.

The only evidence linking Ramos to the murder was the knife found in the victim and the dog scent identification.

Trial Summary:

06/11/82 Indicted on one count of First-Degree Murder
01/25/83 Jury returned a guilty verdict on the sole count of the indictment
01/26/83 Jury recommended a life sentence
03/10/83 Judge overrode the jury recommendation and sentenced Ramos to death

Retrial Summary:

04/24/87 Acquitted at retrial

Appeal Summary:**Florida Supreme Court – Direct Appeal**

FSC# 63,444
496 So.2d 121

03/28/83 Appeal filed
08/28/86 FSC vacated conviction and sentence and remanded for retrial

Case Information:

Ramos filed a Direct Appeal with the Florida Supreme Court on 03/28/83. The FSC found that the dog scent lineup was not conducted in a fair manner, and that the reliability and accuracy of dog scent identification was questionable. On 08/28/86, the FSC vacated the conviction and sentence and remanded the case for retrial.

Law Enforcement/Prosecution Statements:

Christopher White, who represented the State at the original trial, had the following statement: “Just because someone is found not guilty does not mean that they are innocent. I can’t say that he was innocent.”

Defense Statements:

On 05/15/02, the following statement was taken from Norman Wolfinger, who represented Ramos at his original trial: “This was just a case that was botched by the police. The case was handled properly by the courts, but once the evidence against Ramos was suppressed, the case against him was over.”

Current Status:

Ramos was acquitted at his retrial.

There is no information available as to Ramos' criminal history subsequent to his acquittal.

Report Date: 05/08/02 JFL
Approved: 05/08/02 WS
Updated: 07/09/02 JFL