



PRESS RELEASE

SCOTT LOUGHNER, ACTING CHIEF OF POLICE

HOMICIDE CONVICTION OVERTURNED BY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Downey, CA, March 6, 2024

On September 2, 2000, the Downey Police Department was dispatched to a reported shooting at 13525 Deming Avenue, apartment 12. Officers arrived on scene and discovered a 15-year-old male suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. The Downey Fire Department arrived on scene and began medical treatment. The victim was transported to a local hospital but, later died that morning from his wounds.

Downey Police Department detectives immediately began their investigation to identify the suspects responsible for the homicide. Through the investigation, Ronald Velasquez and Abraham Villalobos were identified as the suspects in the homicide. Velasquez was arrested on September 2, 2000, and Villalobos was arrested on September 28, 2000, after a warrant was issued for his arrest.

On September 5, 2000, this case was presented to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office for filing considerations. Murder chargers were filed against Velasquez and Villalobos.

On January 30, 2002, a jury convicted Velasquez and Villalobos of murder at the end of a trial. Velasquez was sentenced to 60 years to life and Villalobos was sentenced to 25 years to life.

In 2021, a Conviction Review Request Form was submitted to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU), on behalf of Velasquez. In these type of requests, the CIU investigates claims of factual innocence and wrongful conviction based on alleged new evidence presented by defendants convicted in Los Angeles County. The vast majority of these claims are denied. On March 6, 2024, however, based on the CIU's investigation, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced the exoneration of Velasquez and Villalobos of their murder convictions.

The Downey Police Department did not participate in the CIU's investigation. The City of Downey and the Downey Police Department disagree with the outcome of the CIU investigation and are disappointed in the District Attorney's decision. This case was

prosecuted before a jury, which rightfully convicted both Velasquez and Villalobos of murder based on the substantial amount of evidence presented. Any “new” evidence that was reviewed by the CIU does not support a reversal of this outcome. Additionally, the convictions themselves were repeatedly affirmed on appeal by the state courts as well.

The Downey Police Department continues to maintain community safety as its top priority, and carries its duties with the highest integrity and accountability standards. The CIU investigation and decision by the District Attorney was not in any respect due to the Downey Police Department’s handling of the case.

Further press inquiries may be directed to Lieutenant Maria Villegas at (562) 904-2302, mvillegas@downeyca.org.