



PRESS RELEASE

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Los Angeles District Attorney's Office agrees to free Iraq-war vet wrongfully convicted of murder

Los Angeles, CA - The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office today accepted the recommendation of its newly-created Conviction Review Unit (CRU) and has agreed to ask a court to release Raymond Jennings, who was convicted of murdering 18-year old Michelle O'Keefe in a Palmdale, California parking lot on February 22, 2000.

Jennings' attorney, Jeffrey I. Ehrlich of the Ehrlich Law Firm in Encino, California, first requested that the CRU vacate Jennings' conviction in October 2015. In April 2016, the CRU agreed to re-open the investigation of the O'Keefe murder, and is now actively pursuing a murder investigation focusing on new suspects.

The District Attorney will appear with Ehrlich in Department 100 of the Los Angeles Superior Court on June 23, 2016 at 8:30 a.m., and they will jointly request that the court release Jennings from prison on his own recognizance. In 60 days, the parties will return to court, and the District Attorney is expected to ask the court to vacate Jennings' conviction based on new evidence that shows that Jennings is innocent.

On the night of the murder, Jennings, then 25 years old, had been patrolling the parking lot as an unarmed security guard. He heard gunshots and saw a car slowly rolling backward into a planter. Ms. O'Keefe's body was inside, slumped over the steering wheel. She had been shot multiple times.

No forensic evidence tied Jennings to the crime. There was no gunshot residue on his clothes, nor was there any hair, fibers, or other trace evidence to suggest he had been in contact with the victim. No witness claimed to have seen the crime. At the time, Jennings was a 7-year veteran of the Army National Guard, with no prior criminal record. He held a "secret" security clearance and was studying to be a U.S. Marshal.

The murder went unsolved for over 5 years. In 2005, the District Attorney's office charged Jennings with the murder, and he was arrested while he was on leave from serving in Iraq with his National Guard Unit. The case against Jennings was wholly circumstantial, and was primarily based on a now-discredited claim that he knew non-public details about the crime that only O'Keefe's killer would have known.

Jennings was tried three times, with the first two juries unable to reach a verdict. In December 2009, a third jury convicted Jennings of second-degree murder. He was sentenced to a life term. His conviction was affirmed on appeal in 2011.

In June 2015, Jennings' case came to the attention Ehrlich's law-student son, Clinton Ehrlich. Clinton had seen a link on the internet to an NBC "Dateline" episode about the case. After watching the program he concluded that the case against Jennings was flawed, and he did further research. A few days later he convinced his father to take on the case for Jennings pro bono.

Clinton continued to develop a critique of the State's case against Jennings, and on October 2, 2015, the father-son team submitted a 34-page single-spaced [letter to the CRU](#), refuting every aspect of the State's case. The letter persuaded the four experienced prosecutors staffing the CRU that Jennings was innocent and that the O'Keefe murder investigation should be re-opened. A new investigation was launched in May 2016.

The new investigation immediately focused on the people other than Jennings who had been in the parking lot when O'Keefe was shot.

Jennings, who has five children, has thus far served over 11 years in prison.

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For more information about the Jennings case please see the website for the Ehrlich Law Firm, www.ehrlichfirm.com. Jeffrey I. Ehrlich can be contacted at 818.905.3070.

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