



NEWS RELEASE

Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes
Passaic County Prosecutor's Office
401 Grand Street
Paterson, NJ 07505

GUILTY VERDICT IN AX MURDER CASE

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY:

JULY 2, 2010

Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes has announced that a jury returned guilty verdicts on Tuesday, June 29 and Thursday, July 1, 2010, before the Honorable Raymond A. Reddin, J.S.C., in the prosecution of Fernando Chireno. Chireno was convicted on Tuesday of first degree Murder; third degree Possession of a Weapon; second degree Possession of a Weapon for an Unlawful Purpose; second degree Burglary and second degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child. On Thursday, the jury returned guilty verdicts on Aggravating Factors of committing the Murder during the commission of a Burglary and of committing the Murder in Violation of a Restraining Order under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act.

Chireno, 34 of Passaic, was arrested April 18, 2008 by members of the Passaic Police Department only hours after killing his wife, Luisa Chireno, by striking her with an ax about her head and body over 15 times. Officers, who were processing the crime scene, arrested Chireno as he sat in a taxi cab at the intersection of Myrtle and Sherman Ave. in Passaic. The cab driver, who delivered Chireno to the police, had moments earlier driven the victim's brother to the crime scene and was shown a photo of Chireno and told of the murder during the ride. Upon departing the scene the cab driver was flagged down by Chireno who entered the vehicle only blocks away. The quick thinking cab driver immediately drove Chireno back into the arms of waiting police who arrested Chireno without incident.

The victim and Chireno were residing separately as a result of a Domestic Violence Restraining Order issued in early March. A subsequent search of Chireno's apartment led police to a local Home Depot where surveillance video captured Chireno, hours earlier, buying a knife and the ax he used to commit the murder. Also located in his room was a note wherein he apologized to his mother and children for the fact that he was going to kill his wife.

At trial Chireno raised the defense of Insanity, claiming that he was hearing voices and that he was commanded by God to kill his wife. The defense presented evidence through a psychiatrist, Dr. Latimer, that Chireno was Schizophrenic and had been treated since the age of

15 for the disorder as well as behavioral problems. Dr. Latimer testified that as a result of the disorder, Chireno, during a psychotic episode, was insane and did not understand that what he was doing was wrong. The State presented contrary evidence through Dr. Greenfield that while the defendant did suffer from some psychiatric disorder, he was not insane at the time of the offense and in fact appreciated what he was doing and was motivated by the fact that he believed his wife was cheating on him.

The case was prosecuted by Chief Assistant Prosecutors Mark Ranges and Gina Pfund. Harley D. Breite, Esq. of Wayne represented Chireno. As a result of the guilty verdict on the charge of Murder and the finding by the jury of Aggravating Factors, the defendant faces a mandatory sentence of Life without Parole when he is sentenced on September 17, 2010. Chireno could also face consecutive sentences of between 3-5 years on the third degree offense and between 5-10 years on each of the second degree offenses.