

Claude Simmons, Jr. and Christopher Shun Scott

On the night of April 6, 1997, Alfonzo Aguilar and his wife, Celia Escobedo, spent the night at a relative's duplex in Dallas, Texas. Escobedo was awakened by a noise and was confronted by a man pointing a gun. Another man demanded money from Aguilar while the first man sexually assaulted Escobedo. During the assault, her attacker was startled and shot and killed Aguilar.

The following day, when Escobedo was brought to the police station to view photographs, she walked past a room where Claude Simmons, 42, was being interrogated in handcuffs for an unrelated drug offense. She said she recognized him as one of the attackers.

Ultimately, she selected the photograph of [Christopher Shun Scott](#), 27, as the man who sexually assaulted her and shot her husband.

In October 1997, Scott and Simmons were tried separately. The prosecution case against both men relied almost solely on Escobedo's identifications. Defense attorneys attempted to introduce evidence that two other men committed the crime and that one of them, Alonzo Hardy, had admitted to participating in it. The trial judge refused to allow the defense to present the evidence.

Scott was convicted on October 16 and Simmons was convicted on October 23, after the jury deliberated just six minutes. Both men were sentenced to life in prison.

In 2005, a group of students at the University of Texas at Arlington Innocence Network took on the case and began re-investigating. Joined by students at the University of Texas at Austin Actual Innocence Clinic, they discovered that Hardy had told a girlfriend that he and Don Michael Anderson had committed the crime.

In 2008, the students persuaded the Dallas County District Attorney's Office to take another look at the case. By then, Hardy had been in prison since 1999, serving a 30-year prison term for a robbery that was committed after Aguilar was murdered and Escobedo was assaulted.

Interviewed in prison, Hardy confessed and passed a polygraph examination. Scott and Simmons also passed polygraph examinations that showed they were not involved in the crime.

On October 21, 2009, Simmons and Scott were released from prison and the charges were dismissed. Anderson was arrested and charged with murder and sexual assault. Hardy was also charged with murder and sexual assault.

On March 3, 2010, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals declared both men innocent.

Simmons and Scott each received compensation of a lump sum of \$960,000 plus \$80,000 a year for life. As of 2012, Simmons had received \$1,127,639.