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Falsely Imprisoned Man Hoping For Settlement From City

Man In Jail For Almost 14 Years, Now In Mid-30's

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LOS ANGELES -- An attorney for a Los Angeles-area man, who has been incarcerated for nearly 14 years for a crime he didn't commit, said Thursday he hopes the city and his client can "quickly, quietly and efficiently" work out a reasonable financial settlement.

Eric Robinson was convicted in 1994 for the June 25, 1993, murder of Edward Fuentes, who was gunned down in a South Los Angeles drive-by shooting. Two other men were also wounded in the gang-related shooting.

Earlier this year, after a rehearing was granted in Robinson's case, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office dismissed all charges against him.

On Tuesday, Robinson filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in downtown Los Angeles, claiming violations of his civil rights, malicious prosecution and false imprisonment. The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages.

"We're hoping the city and us can come to a reasonable solution," attorney Andrew Stein said today. "I'm not a man who is greedy."

A representative from the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office had no comment on the matter as the city hasn't been served with the lawsuit yet.

Robinson, who is now in his mid-30s, was arrested for Fuentes' murder about two weeks after the fatal shooting, the lawsuit said. Eyewitnesses said the passenger of a U-Haul truck fired several rounds during a gunfight with a rival gang, according to the lawsuit.

One bullet pierced the U-Haul truck, hitting a passenger who bled type "O" blood on the interior of the vehicle, the lawsuit said. Robinson has type "B" blood, the lawsuit said.

No eyewitnesses put Robinson at the scene of the crime, the lawsuit said.

The detectives investigating the case, Mark Arneson and Oscar Munoz, framed Robinson for the murder, despite flimsy evidence and dishonest witnesses, the lawsuit said.

Arneson is currently a co-defendant in the federal wiretapping case against celebrity private investigator Anthony Pellicano. That trial is scheduled to begin next February.

Arneson, described as having "a long and disgraceful record of misconduct as a member of the LAPD," directed or conspired with two witnesses to give false testimony against Robinson, the lawsuit alleges.

Months after the shooting, Arneson learned that Fuentes' killer wasn't Robinson, but Reggie Lucas, who was slain June 27, 1993, in retaliation for Fuentes' death, the lawsuit said.

Arneson and the other LAPD detectives hid information proving Robinson's innocence from prosecutors and Robinson's defense lawyers, knowing Robinson "would be convicted illegally and unjustifiably for the murder of Eddie Fuentes," according to the lawsuit.

Arneson also coerced witnesses to testify against Robinson, telling them "their families and their associates would be targeted by the LAPD for harassment, unlawful arrest and excessive uses of force," the lawsuit said.

Former LAPD chief Daryl Gates is also named as a defendant in the lawsuit.

Today, Stein said he wants "some economic justice" for his client, whom he said was robbed of the prime years of his life. A structured settlement -- with payments in installments -- could help Robinson go back to school and start his life over, Stein said.

Stein also praised the appellate division of the District Attorney's Office for dismissing charges against Robinson once his case was reheard.

"[They] really deserve kudos, in my opinion," he said. "They did one of the highest-class things I've seen them do ever."

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