

Johnnie L Cochran Jr Dies at 67

Written by Robert ID1079

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FBI and the Los Angeles authorities for prosecutorial misconduct.

Cochran was devastated when Pratt was convicted in July 1972 of murder. Although the husband of Caroline Olsen, the murdered woman, had identified Pratt as the assailant and a former Black Panther rival, Julius Butler, had testified against Pratt, Cochran was confident the system would exonerate his client.

Only years later would Cochran learn that Butler, the witness against Pratt, had been an informant for the government, including the district attorney's office. Butler had denied that on the stand. If Cochran had known at the time, it would have been a different case.

"I had learned that prosecutors and law enforcement officials, convinced of their own righteousness, would do anything to make the system yield the "right result," " Mr. Cochran wrote.

Years later, Cochran would suggest that the LAPD did just that to make their case against Simpson ,and others would accuse Cochran of using similar methods to defend Simpson.

But one case he stayed involved with for more than two decades was that of Geronimo Pratt. "Some people would say that Cochran abandoned the case. I know better," said Hanlon, who spent 23 years continuously working the case. "He was always there when I needed to talk to him."

Not only did Cochran lend his expertise when they finally got a hearing on whether Pratt's conviction should be overturned, he also lent his credit card to the effort. "We were broke," said Hanlon.

Because the court hearing was transferred from Los Angeles to the Orange County courtroom of a conservative judge, Cochran's presence was key. "I was a known radical," said Hanlon. "He brought credibility to the courtroom that I couldn't bring.

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Geronimo Pratt's murder conviction was overturned in May 1997, and he was freed after 27 years behind bars. The Los Angeles district attorney declined to retry him. Cochran helped Pratt secure a \$4.5-million settlement of a false imprisonment lawsuit.

"There are so many cases I believe in," said Cochran in a 2004 phone interview. "Probably the biggest was Pratt...Just getting him free — I remember that day down in Orange County, that was probably the happiest day for me in my whole career."

Contributing [Source](#)