



Last Word Society - 2017

LW3 O.J.: If the Case Were Tried Today, What the Science Would Say

Adam Itzkowitz, JD, 736 Vallance Way, NE, Saint Petersburg, FL 33716*

After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand how today's advances in forensic science could affect the O.J. Simpson trial if the case were tried today.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by illustrating: (1) the challenges that were presented in the collection of evidence; (2) the methods that were available to accurately test the evidence; as well as, (3) how the evidence was presented in the courtroom. Attendees will be shown that 20 years later, the science has changed and prosecutors and defense attorneys are better prepared to present scientific evidence to a jury.

Despite all the evidence in the case, most people think that the most damaging evidence was the scientific evidence. A time of death estimated by the coroner fit perfectly with O.J. Simpson's lack of an alibi. Hairs and fibers found at the scene, in a knit cap possibly dropped by the assailant, and on the shirt of Ronald Goldman were matched to those from O.J. Simpson. Bloody size-12 shoeprints were found at the crime scene, which were the same size as shoes Simpson wore. Those shoeprints were determined to match the prints of a rare Bruno Magli shoe. Rare, yes; however, in his subsequent civil trial, a picture surfaced of Simpson, who wears a size 12 shoe, wearing a pair of Bruno Magli shoes. But most damaging of all the scientific evidence was the DNA.

Most experts claim there has never been a trial in which there was more DNA evidence. If prosecutors could dream up a scenario where there was scientific evidence linking someone to a crime, this was it. They described it as a trail of evidence, from the crime scene, into O.J. Simpson's white Ford Bronco, then ending back at his house.

While the defense's explanation of this evidence included well-documented racial animus, the defense team also argued that the results of testing were tainted due to sloppy evidence handling by the police department.

While nobody knows what affect, if any, the defense argument had on the jury, one thing is certain: despite all the evidence pointing toward him, O.J. Simpson was acquitted of the double homicide of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman.

In conclusion, this presentation will evaluate a variety of scientific evidence presented in the case. The first segment of this presentation will examine the blood evidence in the case and address how the science, storage, and handling affected the evidence. This presentation will further examine how the science has evolved since the trial and how those advances would cause the evidence to be viewed in a different light today.

The second portion of this presentation will examine how a scientific evidentiary issue, such as the admissibility of luminol testing, affected the trial and how, 20 years later, the courts would rule on such an issue in light of the advances in forensic science since this trial.

DNA, O.J. Simpson, Admissibility of Evidence