

Ruben Cantu

Convicted 1985
San Antonio (Bexar County) Texas

Executed 1993



Guilty or Not?????

Background:

- * Cantu was age 17 when arrested, no prior convictions
- * Former special ed student, skipped school, ran with a tough crowd
- * Charged in death of Pedro Gomez, shot during an attempted robbery on Nov. 8, 1984
- * Eyewitness who survived, Juan Moreno, twice told police early on it was not Cantu. Case seemed to be dropped by police.
- * Cantu got involved in a bar fight March 1, 1985, with a cop; cop was shot (that case thrown out because of problems)
- * Police again questioned Moreno. He was pressured by authorities and later identified Cantu as being involved. Moreno was an undocumented immigrant.
- * Convicted and sentenced to death; continued to proclaim his innocence post trial
- * Codefendant Garza pled, avoided death. Did not name Cantu as being involved
- * Executed August 24, 1993

Houston Chronicle investigation revealed

- * No physical evidence (not even bullet or fingerprint) tied Cantu to murder
- * Alibi witnesses for Cantu were never interviewed by police
- * Police reports have holes and irregularities
- * Defense attorneys on appeal never tried to find Moreno and interview him
- * Both Garza and Moreno indicated again later on that Cantu was not involved

Quotes from key people connected to the case

*** Sam Millsap, Bexar County District Attorney at the time of the case**

"We have a system that permits people to be convicted based on evidence that could be wrong because it's mistaken or it's corrupt," (*South Shore Forum* 11/23/05)

"...What makes the Cantu case so troubling is that it could happen anywhere—even Kansas. Ruben Cantu received more than the fair trial our system guarantees—he arguably received a perfect trial. He had a fine defense attorney and a fair judge; every bit of exculpatory evidence was voluntarily disclosed to the defense and fully litigated. And yet, almost 25 years later, very serious questions remain..." (testimony to Kansas Senate Judiciary Committee 1/20/2010)

*** Miriam Ward, Cantu jury forewoman**

"We did the best we could with the information we had, but with a little extra work, a little extra effort, maybe we'd have gotten the right information."

"The bottom line is, an innocent person was put to death for it. We all have our finger in that."

To learn more:

"Did Texas execute an innocent man?" Lise Olsen, *Houston Chronicle*, 11/20/05

<http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Did-Texas-execute-an-innocent-man-1559704.php>

"Mistrust: Court's decision to leave a wrongful execution inquiry with a tainted DA clouds Texas justice." *Houston Chronicle*, 9/5/2006

<http://www.chron.com/opinion/editorials/article/Mistrust-Court-s-decision-to-leave-a-wrongful-1898931.php>

"Legislature should seriously reconsider the death penalty" by Grant Jones and Sam Millsap (both former district attorneys) *Houston Chronicle*, 12/13/2012

<http://www.chron.com/opinion/outlook/article/Legislature-should-seriously-reconsider-the-death-4116758.php>

