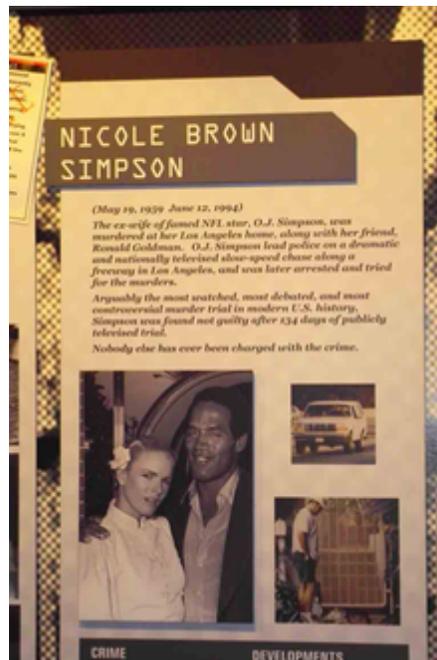


So...What Went Wrong?

Evidence Collection

From the beginning, there were issues involving evidence collection. An important bloody fingerprint located on the gateway at Nicole Brown's house was not collected, secured, and entered into the chain of custody when it was first located. Although it was documented by Fuhrman, one of the first detectives on the scene, in his notes, no further action was taken to secure it.



The detectives who took over Fuhrman's shift apparently were never aware of the print and eventually the print was lost or destroyed without ever being collected. Other items of evidence were also never logged or entered into the chain of custody, which gave the impression that sloppy forensic collection had been carried out at the scene.

The prosecution had expert witnesses that testified that the evidence was often mishandled. Photos were taken of critical evidence without scales in them to aid in measurement taking;

items were photographed without being labeled and logged, making it difficult, if not impossible, to link the photos to any specific area of the scene. Separate pieces of evidence were bagged together instead of separately causing cross-contamination; and wet items were packaged before allowing them to dry, causing critical changes in evidence.

Nicole Brown's body was covered with a blanket which came from inside the house, this completely contaminated the body and anything the blanket touched around the body. Beyond poor evidence collection techniques, sloppy maneuvering at the scene caused more bloody LAPD shoe prints at the scene than perpetrator prints, which gave the appearance of forensic ineptitude.

Securing the Evidence

Throughout the investigation, there were issues with how evidence was secured. There was about 1.5 mL of O.J. Simpson's blood assumed missing from a vial of evidence. The LAPD could not counter the idea of "lost blood" because there was no documentation of how much reference blood was taken from Simpson as evidence. The person who drew the blood could only guess he had taken 8 mL; only 6 mL could be accounted for by the LAPD.

To add to the problem, the blood was not immediately turned over as evidence but was carried around for a few hours before it was entered into the chain of custody, allowing for speculation of when and how the 1.5 mL of blood may have disappeared.

The security of LAPD storage and labs was also brought under scrutiny when it was found that evidence was altered or was accessed to by unauthorized personnel. Simpson's Bronco was entered at least twice by unauthorized personnel while in the impound yard; Nicole Simpson's mother's glasses had a lens go missing while it was in the LAPD facility.

A Question of Planted Evidence

Not only were there many claims that the evidence was mishandled in the police lab but there were also claims that evidence was planted at the crime scene. Because the police department did not have proper collection documents regarding Simpson's blood, it was argued that the police planted Simpson's missing blood on critical evidence and in critical areas of the murder scene.

The defense team stated that EDTA was found in the samples of blood that were collected at the crime scene. EDTA is a blood fixer (anticoagulant) used in labs and mixed with collected blood. If evidence with Simpson's blood showed traces of EDTA, the defense claimed, then that blood had to have come from the lab, which meant that it was planted.

However, EDTA is also a chemical found naturally in human blood and chemicals such as paint. At the time, tests were not readily available to differentiate between natural and contaminant EDTA or the differences in the level of EDTA in blood. Some believe that the positive EDTA results may have been due to contamination of the equipment used to run the tests.

A Question of Character

Mark Fuhrman, one of the first detectives on the scene, was discredited by the prosecution when he was alleged to be a racist and was accused of planting evidence. He perjured himself on the stand and when asked if he had falsified police reports or planted evidence in the Simpson case he invoked the 5th Amendment, the right against self incrimination. This put anything he touched in the investigation under scrutiny.

Fuhrman was accused of planting critical evidence, contaminating it with Simpson's blood, and falsifying police records. In Fuhrman's book, he stated that at one point he was even accused of killing Nicole Brown and Robert Goldman himself.

Understanding Forensic Science

A major hurdle that the prosecution team failed to overcome was the lack of knowledge and understanding regarding forensic science, specifically DNA. The jurors agreed that the DNA testimony was difficult to appreciate since expert witnesses were not able to put their evidence in terms that the jury could understand.

This inability to understand key evidence made the evidence essentially useless; even some seasoned lawyers found the scientific testimonies to be incomprehensible. It is reported that the DNA evidence showed that the chance that some of the blood found near the bodies came from anyone but Simpson was 1 in 170 million. The chance that blood found on Simpson's sock could be from someone other than Nicole Brown was 1 in 21 billion.

What happened in the trial of O.J. Simpson that led to his acquittal?

The role of the jury is to listen to both sides of the case (prosecutor and defense). The jurors have to unanimously decide guilt or innocence. Whatever the outcome, the jurors must feel that their decision is BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT.

OJ Simpson's acquittal continues to be one of the most discussed and debated cases in US History. Forensic collection played an important role in this investigation and many believe it's what also created much of the doubt for the jurors.

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