

CIVIL RIGHTS

Police Misconduct

Wrongful Death

VERDICT: \$1,783,500 gross

CASE/NUMBER: Orleatha Thomas v. LAPD, et al. / BC086856

COURT/DATE: L.A. Superior Glendale / May 18, 1995

JUDGE: Hon. Charles W. Stoll, Dept. D

DISBURSEMENT: \$283,500 gross economic and \$1,500,000 gross non-economic; \$249,480 net economic and \$345,000 net non-economic — \$594,480 net total to Plaintiffs

ATTORNEYS: Plaintiff - Gregory A. Yates (Beverly Hills)

Defendant - Victor A. Schulte (City Attorney's Office, L.A.)

TECHNICAL EXPERTS: Plaintiff - David Dotson, police procedures, Pasadena

MEDICAL EXPERTS: Plaintiff - William H. Kroes, M.D., psychologist, L.A.

Defendant - Martin Reiser, M.D., psychologist, L.A.

FACTS: In May 1992, off-duty LAPD Officer Victor Ramos used his police gun to severely beat and threaten his estranged wife, Melba, over an affair she was having. Ramos had allegedly hit, kicked, punched, pulled out clumps of his wife's hair, and pointed a gun at her during the May incident; these allegations were not included in the report filed by the investigating officers. The man with whom Melba was having the affair was 39-year-old Gregory Thomas, a trainer at a Hollywood health club, a man who was not estranged from his wife. Following that first beating, LAPD returned Officer Ramos to active duty and gave him back his gun. On August 12, 1992, Victor Ramos, off-duty and drunk, shot and killed both Melba and Gregory Thomas before shooting himself. The shooting took place in Melba Ramos' Glendale apartment. Plaintiffs were Orleatha Thomas and her 2 children, ages 10 and 7 years; the family of Gregory Thomas.

CONTENTIONS: Plaintiffs contended that Defendant LAPD had prior knowledge of Officer Ramos' violent propensities from the Spring incident; failed to deal effectively with the spousal abuse; and prevented proper intervention by LAPD to address/treat Ramos' dangerous emotional state. Plaintiffs therefore contended that Defendant LAPD was liable for the wrongful death of their husband/father. Defendant LAPD contended that, in both incidents, Ramos was off-duty and drunk; and they had no knowledge of his dangerous propensities. Defendant further contended that in 2 later taped interviews (May and August of 1992) Melba Ramos admitted that she had not been kicked, punched, or beaten and that Victor only pointed at her computer. Defendant

also contended that Plaintiff Orleatha was repeatedly warned by Victor Ramos that her husband was having an affair with Melba Ramos and could be risking danger.

INJURIES: Death of husband/father.

SPECIALS IN EVIDENCE: LOE & Future LOE \$587,000.

TRIAL JURY: Length 14 days; Poll varied; Deliberation 5.5 days; Comparative Liability 2% Plaintiff Orleatha Thomas, 12% Greg Thomas, 20% Melba Ramos, 43% Victor Ramos, and 23% LAPD (the only Defendant).

SETTLEMENT DISCUSSIONS: Plaintiffs contend that they demanded \$350,000 prior to trial; \$500,000 during trial; and Defendant offered \$50,000 while the jury was in deliberation.

OTHER INFORMATION: This case was filed October 11, 1992; one year, seven months, and one week prior to this result.