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Florida Cop Convicted of Killing Drummer who was Waiting for Roadside Assistance



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By **Nathan Dimoff**

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Palm Beach Gardens police officer Nouman Raja did not realize he was being recorded when he killed Corey Jones.

For the first time since 1989, a Florida cop has been convicted for killing a citizen while on-duty.

But will it stick?

The last Florida cop to be convicted had his conviction reversed upon appeal in a decision that gave cops even more legal leeway to lawfully kill while on duty, which is why these convictions are so rare.

So it's only natural to expect former Palm Beach Gardens police officer Nouman Raja to appeal his conviction for killing Corey Jones, a 31-year-old musician who was stranded

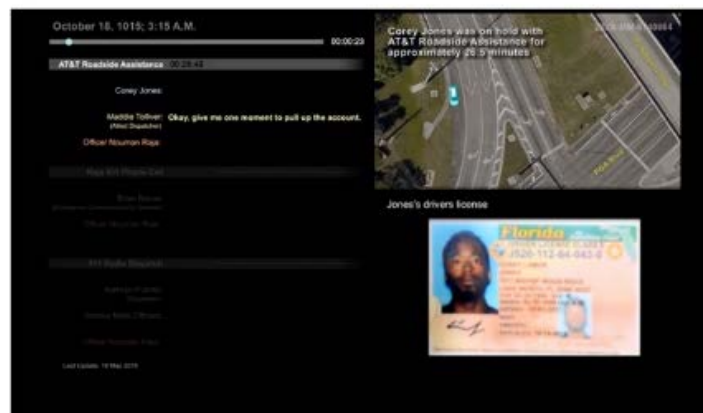
on the side of the road on October 18, 2015 when confronted by the cop who was not in uniform.

Raja was convicted of manslaughter by culpable negligence while armed and attempted first-degree murder with a firearm. He is facing 25 years to life in prison for the bullets that missed Jones and up to 30 years for manslaughter.

Jones was stuck on the side of Interstate-95 after his van had broken down. He was on the phone with his insurance company when Raja in plainclothes pulled up and ordered him to place his hands up without identifying that he was an officer.

That recorded phone call was what Jones' family attorney Ben Crump believed helped push the conviction.

"If it was not for the tape recording, then this police officer would have gotten away with murder."



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When Raja spoke to officers at the scene, he had no idea his actions were recorded and that the investigators would eventually find out he was lying.

Nevertheless, his attorneys said they were "devastated" by the verdict and vowed to continue fighting for his innocence.

The 1989 Conviction

Miami police officer William Lozano was convicted of manslaughter on December 8, 1989 for the killing of two black men on a motorcycle, which sparked the city's third inner-city riot in a decade.

The shooting took place on January 21, 1989, the night before the San Francisco 49ers and Cincinnati Bengals were to play in Super Bowl XXIII a few miles north in what was

then-called Joe Robbie Stadium, creating a public relations disaster for South Florida's tourist industry.

Clement Lloyd was driving the motorcycle with Allan Blanchard as his passenger when a Miami police officer (not Lozano) attempted to pull it over.

Lozano, who was standing on the side of the road taking a report from a citizen, claimed he feared for his life when he saw the motorcycle headed right for him as it tried to evade the other cop.

He said he barely had time to pull off a shot, managing to lift the gun from his holster as the motorcycle was practically on top of him.

Witnesses, however, said Lozano stepped into the street and carefully aimed his weapon, shooting Lloyd in the head, who then crashed his bike. Blanchard died the following day from injuries sustained in the crash.

A Miami jury believed witnesses over police but renowned Florida attorney Roy Black appealed the verdict and had the conviction reversed on the basis the jury only convicted Lozano to avoid another inner-city riot, a claim denied by the jury.

The appeal court agreed with Black, however, and granted Lozano a new trial in a new city much more favorable to police.

Orlando was first chosen, then Tallahassee, then Orlando again when it was determined a Tallahassee jury might not be too sympathetic to a Hispanic cop.

The appeal court also determined the Miami judge was wrong to allow evidence proving Lozano had violated departmental training procedures when he shot at a moving vehicle, ruling that cops cannot be expected to abide by training when making split-second decisions, which has been the basis of many police acquittals in the shooting of citizens over the years.

A [2014 Miami Herald article](#) on the 25-year anniversary of Lozano's conviction explains the ruling.

And the legal opinion that gave Lozano a second chance also barred prosecutors from revealing to jurors the details of internal police procedures and training. The ruling set a powerful precedent, all but dooming prosecutions in a state that already affords wide latitude for cops to use deadly force to protect themselves and others.

“That ruling and that opinion has come back to haunt us,” said Miami-Dade Chief Assistant State Attorney Don Horn, one of the prosecutors who convicted Lozano on Dec. 7, 1989.

Lozano could not be reached for comment, but his famed Miami defense attorney Roy Black sees a positive legal legacy. The case, he said, ensured police officers, tasked with protecting the community, remain able to act quickly in the face of danger.

“Those rulings really worked to the benefit of the cops on the street,” Black said.

The rare conviction

Since Lozano's acquittal in 1993, hundreds, if not thousands of cops in this country, have escaped prosecution after questionable killings, including many shootings where cops have jumped in front of moving vehicles and claimed they were in fear for their lives.

And even as these incidents are increasingly recorded on audio or video, these convictions are still rare.

On January 18, 2016, Daniel Shaver was shot and killed while crawling towards officers in Arizona. The Mesa police officer was charged but found not guilty even though video shows Shaver on his hands and knees pleading for his life.

Last year, the same department was caught on camera beating a man waiting for his friends. The department investigated itself and found the officers acted appropriately.

Michael C. Marsh, a friend of Corey Jones who was arrested in ensuing protests, took to social media Thursday to express his sentiments.

During the hearing, Circuit Judge Joseph Marx revoked Raja's \$250,000 house arrest bond. Raja is set to be sentenced on April 26.

Carlos Miller contributed to this report.