

# Media Impact on Outcomes of Criminal Court Cases

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# Introduction

We looked to see how media played a role in 3 highly known criminal cases as well as the process that occurred during the time of crime and after



# O.J. Simpson Trial

- O.J. Simpson was accused of two murders committed on the night of June 12, 1994. Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman were found dead outside her Brentwood home of Los Angeles
- O.J. became a suspect after officers found a bloody glove behind his house and was charged on June 17, 1994
- During the time he agreed to turn himself in, his friend Al Cowling and O.J. were in a low-speed pursuit in a white 1993 Ford Bronco SUV. The pursuit was live and had to interrupt the 1994 NBA finals. This case was broadcasted widely as it was the “trial of the century.”
- It was the most publicized event in American history. On the defense team included initially Robert Shapiro and was later led by Johnnie Cochran, F. Lee Bailey, Alan Dershowitz, Robert Kardashian, Shawn Holey and Carl E. Douglas. The two attorneys who specialized in DNA evidence were Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld.

# O.J. Simpson Trial (Continue)

-District Attorneys Marcia Clark, William Hodgman and later Christopher Darden had a strong case against O.J. Simpson, but Johnnie Cochran was able to persuade the jury that there was a mishandle in the DNA evidence by the LAPD and that its related to racism especially towards Detective Mark Fuhrman. Simpson was acquitted on October 3rd, 1995.

-A poll was taken of the Los Angeles County residents that shows most African American's agree with the "not guilty" verdict, while whites and Latinos did not agree with the verdict. During 2015, a poll was taken again by the residents and over half polled black responders believe now that Simpson was guilty.

-The families of Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman filed a lawsuit after the trial against Simpson. The jury unanimously found Simpson responsible for both deaths on February 4, 1997. Both families were granted totaling to \$53.4 million dollars but has only received a small portion.

# The media frenzy

In June 17, 1994 the unthinkable happened, all TV stations switched to live helicopter footage of the slow chase of the White Ford bronco which had OJ sitting in it running from LAPD.

Game 5 of the NBA finals was cut off to show footage of OJ, the NBA finals which had averaged about 13 million viewers in 1994 per game was cut to its lowest to date. Over 95 million Americans were glued to their TV's watching beloved sports figure OJ Simpson running from the police.

In addition to booming TV ratings, press conferences like that of Robert Kardashian and Robert Shapiro lead many to believe OJ was guilty with evidence such as his letter he wrote before he ran from police and the police chase.



# How did OJ get acquitted?

The addition of **Johnnie Cochran** was a pivotal change of the case. Cochran was known for his CNN contributions discrediting the LAPD on their racially motivated poor treatment of black Americans and as a successful and charismatic lawyer.

The legal team led by Cochran shifted the angle of attack on the case by creating doubt on every piece of evidence, even casting doubt on the police officers by claiming they set up OJ.

This method worked, by tapping into the racial bias narrative of the police the public opinion quickly shifted, many black Americans thought he was innocent despite the DNA evidence which linked OJ as the murderer.



*O.J. Simpson looks at a new pair of Aris extra-large gloves that prosecutors had him put on June 21, 1995 during his double-murder trial in Los Angeles.*

*Cochran's greatest shadow of doubt was casted by this ploy to have oJ wear the same sized gloves found at the scene and ended his statement by saying, "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit."*



# The Legacy of OJ Simpson Case



Cable news in the time of OJ was just taking off as being household names, CNN was already 14 years as being a network but the OJ trail boosted ratings for the network, leading it to become a 24/7 news network. The use of Combination of “experts” and analysts to drag news headlines for hours like in the peak of the OJ news coverage was a formula that worked for CNN and became the trend of many other news networks like MSNBC and Fox News.

The LAPD’s reputation took a significant hit as well, something that started with failure to indict in the Rodney King murder which lead to riots over police brutality.

Nicole Brown became the face of domestic violence.

The Kardashians became a household name, along with anyone involved such as friend of OJ Kato Kaelin who all became celebrities overnight.



# The Central Park Jogger

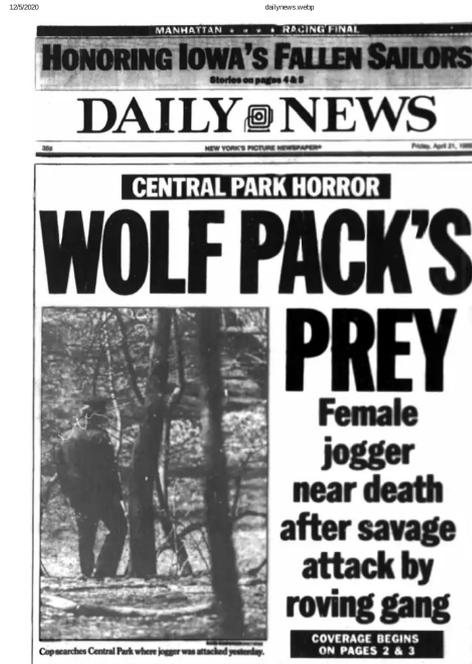
- On April 20, 1989, a woman's body was discovered in Central Park. The woman, who had been out for a jog the night before, had been beaten and repeatedly raped.
- The same day, five teenagers who had been in the park the night before were arrested for the assault: Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Yusef Salaam, Raymond Santana, and Corey Wise. The five were all between the ages of 14-16.
- The woman remained in a coma for nearly two weeks, and when she awoke, she had no memory of the assault.
- The teenagers, all of whom were Latino or African American, became known as the Central Park Five.

# The Central Park Five

- Four out of five of the teens confessed to the crime.
- There was no hard evidence that the five had committed the crime. The only evidence was that the boys had been in the park.
- Despite this, all five were convicted and spent time in jail from 6-13 years.
- Only in 2002, did DNA evidence and a confession from the real rapist, Matias Reyes, set the men free. The charges against them were lifted and they received millions in settlement money.



# The Media Storm



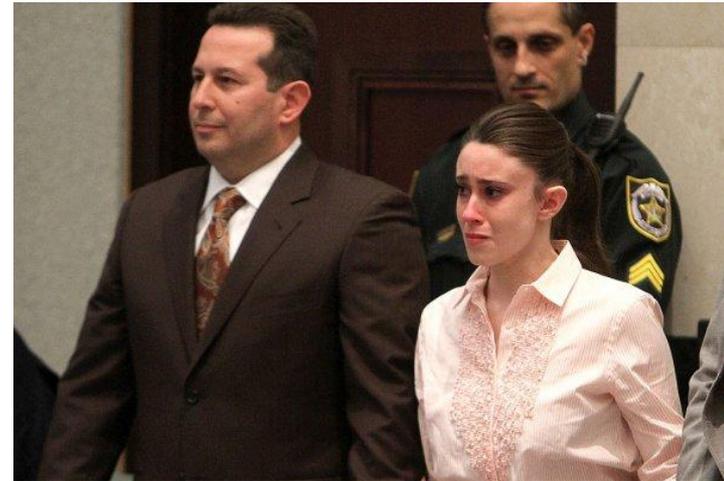
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- On April 21, only a day after the jogger's body was found, the Daily News' frontpage displayed the headline: WOLF PACK'S PREY: Female Jogger Near Death After Savage Attack By Roving Gang.
- Within days, media coverage across the city and soon across the nation had sparked outrage.
- The papers described the teens as "bloodthirsty" and "savage." They quoted the police as saying they had gone "wilding" through the park and had laughed about the assault while in jail. They described the teens as products of a violent environment, where "The enemies were white."
- The movement following the papers' reports screamed for accountability. Some wanted the teens to get the death penalty. If the five had been acquitted, the rage roused by the media would have doubtlessly poured out.
- <https://www.history.com/topics/1980s/central-park-five>

# Casey Anthony Trial

- August 9, 2005: Casey Anthony was 19 and she had given birth to a daughter named Caylee Marie Anthony.
- On July 15, 2008, Cindy Anthony, the grandmother, reported Caylee missing, even though she'd been missing for 31 days.
- Casey told the Orlando police that Caylee was with the babysitter, Zenaida Gonzalez, or "Zanny," but that was a made up story.
- For the next few months, law enforcement searched for clues on where Caylee would be.
- In October, Casey was indicted on seven criminal courts and pleaded not guilty.
- December 2008, Caylee's decomposed body was found wooded area.



# Casey Anthony Trial (Continued)

- 2 years later, prosecution alleged that Casey used chloroform on her daughter and suffocated her by putting duct tape over the little girl's mouth and nose.
- Casey's defense team presented a different theory: that Caylee accidentally drowned in the family's pool.
- The jurors acquitted of Casey the crimes against her.
- There was no evidence found that Casey killed her daughter.
- She was convicted of four lesser charges of lying to the police.
- She was sentenced to 4 years in jail but got out on July 17, 2011 because of good behavior and good time credit.
- <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/29/us/casey-anthony-10-years-later/index.html>
- <http://www.cjcj.org/news/5382>



# How Media Impact on the Outcome

- Media Coverage was non-stop, especially on HNL headed by Nancy Grace.
- Many said that it was “obvious” that the mother was guilty of first degree murder.
- When the final verdict was read, everybody was in an outrage, saying, "there's no way this is a verdict that speaks the truth" and that "death has gone unavenged."
- People Magazine "had writers in court every day" and ABC News had a special called "Crime & Punishment: The Casey Anthony Story."
- <http://www.cjcj.org/news/5382>

