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Zamora Case Ends: Judge cites likely vindictiveness in prosecution

Source ONE News staff
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Joseph Zamora

EPHRATA - The lengthy and tumultuous legal journey of Joseph Zamora, which began in 2017 following a severe police beating in Moses Lake, came to an end on Tuesday.

Grant County Superior Court Judge Tyson Hill ruled that continuing the case against Zamora would be "damaging to the justice system" and indicated that the Grant County prosecutor appeared to have acted vindictively in charging Zamora for the second time, according to court documents obtained by Source ONE News.

The case's trajectory has seen Zamora convicted, imprisoned, released, and then charged again for the same crime. Zamora had been accused, in Washington's chief justice's phrasing, of having "assaulted a police officer's knuckles with the back of his head." The tumultuous proceedings included one elected prosecutor formally reprimanded and his successor chastised for their roles in the case.

Beyond the legal battles, Zamora's physical and mental health suffered significant harm. He endured permanent scarring from the events of the night in question, including spending four weeks in a coma. Reflecting on his ordeal, Zamora said, "This case tested my faith in the justice system, I have suffered greatly physically mentally and emotionally. I can finally try to move on with my life as well as my family."

The initial incident occurred in February 2017. Zamora was mistaken for a prowler, resulting in a severe beating by Moses Lake police. He was pepper-sprayed, Tased, kicked, hogtied, and his injuries were so grave that they caused his heart to stop.

Notably, the officer primarily responsible for the beating had a history of excessive force complaints and was later charged in a separate assault. Zamora, subsequently convicted of assaulting an officer, served 22 months before appealing his conviction on the grounds of race-based misconduct during his trial.

The state Supreme Court unanimously agreed that race-based misconduct had occurred, leading to the tossing out of Zamora's convictions. In a landmark decision, the court established that prosecutorial misconduct had taken place if behavior could be perceived as racially prejudiced.

However, in a controversial move, Prosecutor Kevin McCrae charged Zamora again for the same offenses. Zamora's legal team argued that this was a vindictive act in response to Zamora's successful appeal.

Judge Hill's decision to dismiss the assault charges with prejudice means they cannot be revived. His ruling emphasized that proceeding would damage the justice system more than reinstating the convictions on Zamora's record.

McCrae expressed disappointment to the Seattle Times, stating, "It is unfortunate that the actual facts of this case will not be placed in front of a jury."

While the legal proceedings have concluded, the case leaves lasting implications on the justice system and underscores the need for scrutiny and accountability in prosecution.



Joseph Zamora in coma