

Francisco Acevedo



Classification: **Serial killer**

Characteristics: **Convicted rapist - The killings were linked to Acevedo by DNA he submitted after arrested on a drunken driving charge**

Number of victims: **3**

Date of murders: **1989 / 1991 / 1996**

Date of arrest: **April 2010**

Date of birth: **1968**

Victims profile: **Maria Ramos, 26 / Tawana Hodges, 28 / Kimberly Moore, 30**

Method of murder: **Strangulation**

Location: **Yonkers, Westchester County, New York, USA**

Status: **Sentenced to 75 years to life in prison on January 17, 2012**

Francisco Acevedo gets 75 to life for three murders

By Jim Fitzgerald - Associated Press

January 17, 2012

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. -- A serial killer who avoided detection for 20 years - until he voluntarily gave a DNA sample - was sentenced Tuesday to 75 years to life in prison. Francisco Acevedo, 43, had been convicted of murdering three women in Yonkers between 1989 and 1996.

"These were monstrous crimes by a cruel and inhuman individual," said Westchester County Judge Barbara Zambelli, who combined three maximum sentences.

Relatives of each of the victims denounced Acevedo in court.

Shulisha Ramos was 3 years old when her mother was killed. "I hope you suffer every day of your everlasting life," she said.

Devon Hodges, the mother of another victim, told Acevedo he was "a filthy little animal."

Acevedo maintained his innocence and told the judge he had prayed for the women and their families.

The killings occurred in Yonkers in 1989, 1991 and 1996.

Investigators linked them because each woman was found strangled, naked, bound at the hands and facing upward. They were also linked to each other by DNA found in vaginal swabs, but police did not know whose DNA it was.

In 2009, however, Acevedo voluntarily gave up a DNA sample as a condition of an optional parole application while he was in jail on a drunken driving charge.

The hit on the state's DNA database - 20 years after the first killing - thrilled Yonkers cold case detectives who said they had looked at more than 100 potential suspects in the case, but not Acevedo.

"He wasn't very happy to see us" when police came to arrest him, Detective John Geiss said.

The victims were Maria Ramos, 26, and Tawana Hodges, 38, both of the Bronx, and Kimberly Moore, 30, of Greenburgh.

Acevedo was acquitted of three counts of rape. Police had said Ramos and Hodges were prostitutes.

Acevedo acknowledged he had sex with the three women but denied the rape and murder charges.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo recently proposed expanding the DNA database to include profiles of those convicted of many more crimes, including drunken driving. He said that since 1996, the database has provided leads to 2,700 convictions while helping free 27 people who were wrongly accused.

Francisco Acevedo Voluntarily Gives DNA Then Found Guilty Of 3 Murders

By Jim Fitzgerald - HuffingtonPost.com

November 14, 2011

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. -- A man who was not even a suspect until he voluntarily gave up his DNA was convicted Monday of killing three New York women more than 15 years ago.

Francisco Acevedo, 43, was found guilty of the serial murders on the first day of jury deliberations at the Westchester County courthouse.

He could be sent to prison for 75 years to life when sentenced Jan. 17.

The killings occurred in Yonkers in 1989, 1991 and 1996. Each woman was found strangled, naked, bound at the hands and facing upward. They were also linked to each other by DNA, but police did not know whose DNA it was until 2009.

That's when Acevedo, who was in prison on a drunken driving charge, gave up his DNA sample as a condition of an optional parole application.

A Yonkers cold-case detective said investigators had looked at "way more than 100" other potential suspects over the years before they found Acevedo's blood sample and matched it to the killings.

When Acevedo was arrested on murder charges, "he wasn't very happy to see us," Detective John Geiss said last year.

District Attorney Janet DiFiore said Monday, "The evidence based on DNA testing allowed these three murder victims to point the finger of guilt at this defendant."

At trial, an expert testified it was statistically impossible for the DNA found in vaginal swabs from each of the women to be anyone's but Acevedo's. And a motel clerk said he saw Acevedo with one of the women and then found her dead in her bed.

The victims were Maria Ramos, 26, of the Bronx, killed Feb. 5, 1989; Tawana Hodges, 28, of the Bronx, killed March 28, 1991; and Kimberly Moore, 30, of Greenburgh, killed May 24, 1996.

Acevedo was acquitted of three counts of rape. Police had said Ramos and Hodges were prostitutes.

Acevedo's defense acknowledged he had sex with the three women but denied the rape and murder charges.

New York state serial killer who evaded capture for ten years found guilty after volunteering DNA

DailyMail.co.uk

November 15, 2011

A man who eluded connection to the killing of three New York women for more than a decade was found guilty by a jury and DNA evidence Monday.

A Westchester County jury convicted 43-year-old Francisco Acevedo of the three serial murders between 1989 and 1996.

Awaiting sentencing on January 17th, Acevedo could be sent to prison for 75 years to life. The killings in Yonkers were linked to Acevedo by DNA he submitted after arrested on a drunken driving charge.

Police did not know whose DNA they had collected at the crime scenes prior to his arrest in 2009, nor was Acevedo ever suspected in relation to them.

That's when Acevedo provided a DNA sample as part of a parole application, apparently having no idea that Yonkers detectives were finally closing in on him.

Investigators had looked at 'way more than 100' other potential suspects over the years before they found his blood sample matched the killings, Yonkers Detective John Geiss said.

At the trial, an expert testified it was statistically impossible for the DNA found in all three women to be anyone's but his.

Acevedo's defense acknowledged he had sex with the women but denied rape and murder. He was reportedly very surprised when he was arrested in an upstate prison on the murder charges back in April of 2010.

Police Commissioner Edmund Hartnett said Acevedo had lived in two Yonkers apartments as well as in the Bronx and Mount Vernon during the time of the killings, working at factory jobs.

Detective Geiss said the suspect was 'very familiar' with the area where the bodies were found.

The victims were Maria Ramos, 26, of the Bronx, killed Feb. 5, 1989; Tawana Hodges, 28, of the Bronx, killed March 28, 1991; and Kimberley Moore, 30, of Greenburgh, killed May 1996.

All were found naked, bound at the hands and facing up.

The detective said the victims' families were 'very happy, very happy to have some answers.'

Ex-clerk at motel testifies in Francisco Acevedo triple-murder case

Lohud.com

Nov. 2, 2011

WHITE PLAINS — Carlos Gonzalez recalled the moment when he walked into Room 45 to tell the woman inside that it was past check-out time.

"I keep on kicking the bed, saying, 'Time's up, time's up.' There was no answer," he told a jury Wednesday. "I pulled the bedspread down. There was blood there on her face, on the front of her forehead. I got scared."

Gonzalez, a former motel clerk and the only person to have seen accused serial killer Francisco Acevedo with any of his alleged victims, testified at Acevedo's triple murder trial in Westchester County Court.

Acevedo, 43, is accused of killing three women in Yonkers over a seven-year span, including 30-year-old Kimberly Moore of Greenburgh, who was found dead May 24, 1996, at the Trade Winds Motor Court, a pay-by-the-hour motel on Yonkers Avenue.

He is also accused of killing 26-year-old Maria Ramos in 1989 and 28-year-old Tawanda Hodges in 1991. The bodies of Ramos and Hodges, described by police as north Bronx

prostitutes, were found in the same remote area near the Ludlow Street bridge.

All three cases were linked by DNA, but no one knew where it came from until Acevedo was arrested in 2009 for drunken driving.

He faces first-degree rape charges in all three cases, first- and second-degree murder in Moore's death and second-degree murder in the Ramos and Hodges slayings.

Gonzalez, now a school security guard in Puerto Rico who was flown in to testify, said he was working at 3 p.m. when Moore came to his office and asked if she could stay in the room for a few more hours.

He said she then gestured to a man — Acevedo — on Yonkers Avenue, who met Moore at the bottom of a set of stairs. Gonzalez said he watched them go up to the room together. Gonzalez said he never saw Acevedo leave but suggested he could have left when Gonzalez was having dinner between 5:30 and 6:10 p.m.

The defense is arguing that Acevedo had sex with the women but did not rape or kill them. Under cross-examination, Gonzalez said the motel had a lot of clients who would return daily and sometimes "partied."

A police sergeant testified that crack pipes were found on the floor and a hypodermic needle was under a rug in the room where Moore was killed.

Gonzalez said Moore had used rooms at the motel before. Moore's family has vehemently denied that she was involved in prostitution. Only Acevedo's DNA was found on Moore's body, authorities say.

Acevedo faces life in prison without parole if convicted of first-degree murder. Testimony will continue today and the prosecution expects to rest its case next week.

Suspect in Yonkers serial killings flew under the radar

By Will David - The Journal News

December 19, 2010

Yonkers – All three women were naked, their bodies facing skyward, their hands bound behind their backs.

All were grotesquely posed and left in south Yonkers over a seven-year span; two in a remote industrial neighborhood, the other at an east-side motel.

"It was spooky," said John D'Alessandro, a retired Yonkers detective-turned-lawyer who investigated the three slayings. "We knew it was a ritualistic serial killer."

City police say they have identified the uncharacteristic killer who eluded detectives for two decades — Francisco A. Acevedo Jr., a 42-year-old Connecticut native.

Nicknamed "Artie" or "Frank," Acevedo served a prison sentence for sexually assaulting a

Connecticut woman in 1986.

Yonkers police say it was he who beat, raped and strangled Bronx residents Maria Ramos, 26, on Feb. 5, 1989; Tawanda Hodges, 28, on March 28, 1991; and 30-year-old Kimberly Moore of Greenburgh on May 24, 1996.

Detectives already knew through DNA evidence that the same man was responsible for strangling Ramos and Hodges, both north Bronx prostitutes, and Moore, a one-time all-county gymnast who attended Woodlands High School in Greenburgh.

The final pieces of the case were put together after a nine-year investigation by Detective John T. Geiss of Yonkers' Cold Case Squad and the Westchester County forensics laboratory.

It would hinge on the DNA.

Troubled history

A portrait of Acevedo emerges from the neighborhoods where he lived and worked in Connecticut, Yonkers, Mount Vernon and on Long Island.

Interviews reveal a man who was unassuming and friendly, but with a history of extreme violence dating to his teens, particularly against women. Connecticut records show he abused cocaine, marijuana and alcohol from the age of 12. He also had a history of arrests involving sexual assault, larceny, assault, harassment and drunken driving.

Yet he flew under the radar in the Yonkers killings until after Jan. 26, 2009, when he was arrested in Brentwood, N.Y., on his fourth drunken driving charge.

That conviction landed him in Green Haven Correctional Facility in Dutchess County, where he began serving a one- to three-year sentence May 12, 2009. In January, he provided DNA as a condition of a parole application. Geiss was soon told there was a DNA match to the Yonkers slayings; Acevedo was charged with murder in all three in April.

Family man

At the time of his Brentwood arrest, Acevedo was living in Bay Shore, N.Y., with his wife, Lizette Santiago, 41, and their sons, ages 10 and 7.

The suspect in the serial killings was a pudgy, bespectacled man who stands 5-foot-8. It was hardly what detectives had been expecting.

"I was surprised that he was living with someone and had a couple of children of his own," Geiss said. "You are thinking about a monster you are looking for — a guy who killed three women ... You are thinking the worst, and when you finally find out who it is, you find out that he has a family of his own."

Investigators had simply been looking in the wrong place: They were working with a classic FBI profile of a serial killer — a middle-aged white man with a high IQ.

It was a typical mistake, said Vernon J. Geberth, a retired New York City police lieutenant

commander who was asked by Geiss to look at the case in recent years. Geberth said urban Hispanic and black serial killers are often overlooked by detectives seeking high-IQ killers like Ted Bundy. Acevedo's IQ is a very average 104. "Most of these guys do not have high IQs but they are street smart; that is how they survive," said Geberth, the author of three homicide textbooks including "Sex-Related Homicide and Deaths."

Police in Suffolk County are currently piecing together another possible serial-killer case stemming from the Dec. 11 discovery of four bodies along Ocean Parkway on Long Island. Detectives probing the remains, which were in various stages of decomposition, are looking for patterns or behaviors that might identify that killer or killers. In the Yonkers killings, Geberth described the pattern as "sexual posing."

"He is posing bodies to get some type of psychological charge," Geberth said. Only about 1 percent of the nation's killers are sexual posers, he said. Geiss said he is now working with other police agencies to see whether Acevedo is linked to other homicides.

Conn. guilty plea

Three years before the first Yonkers killing, Acevedo raped and beat a Meriden, Conn., girl, according to court records.

They show that on July 3, 1986, Acevedo was working as a laborer when he picked up the girl in a company pickup and drove her to a secluded area. There, he tied her hands behind her back, blindfolded her and sexually assaulted her.

After his truck got stuck, he walked from Meriden to nearby Berlin and assaulted her again. She fled after he fell asleep. Acevedo pleaded guilty to first-degree sexual assault and second-degree larceny and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

He was released eight months before Ramos' body was found at 78 Fernbrook St. in Yonkers.

Two years later, Hodges was killed and dumped near the Ludlow Street bridge. Five years after Hodges' slaying, Moore's body was found at the Trade Winds Motel at 1141 Yonkers Ave.

Acevedo has pleaded not guilty to all the Yonkers charges. His next court date is Jan. 27. His attorneys, Tamika Ann Coverdale and Janet Ann Gandolfo, are seeking to have the DNA evidence thrown out. They declined to be interviewed.

Odd jobs

The suspect's mother, Yadira Acevedo, 61, said her son grew up in the house in a working-class section of Meriden where she still lives. One of her three children, at 14 he went to live with his father when the couple divorced.

"It has been hard on the family," she said. "I feel bad that I can't go to him." Records show that Acevedo went to Meriden public schools, dropping out of Platt High

School his freshman year. He earned an equivalency diploma Dec. 11, 1986.

Acevedo found work as a laborer, and later as a cook in a pizzeria, a midnight baker at Dunkin' Donuts and a dishwasher at Testa's Silvertown Inn in Connecticut.

By the 1990s, he was living and working in Mount Vernon, including at New Way Kitchen, where he met his wife, according to police.

"I am so surprised," said Nina DeMelo, who was his landlord at 125 Rich Ave. in Mount Vernon. "He's not a bad man."

Domestic violence

By Nov. 11, 1997, Acevedo and his wife were living at 185 Saratoga Ave. in Yonkers, where he was accused of attacking her. The charge of third-degree assault was later dismissed.

But a second arrest, on Aug. 30, 1998, led to a conviction. Records show Acevedo punched his wife in the face and possibly broke her nose while the couple lived at 24 Caryl Ave. in Yonkers.

He served nine months in jail on the misdemeanor conviction.

Vincent Dunn, a 38-year-old Caryl Avenue neighbor, said Acevedo "seemed quiet."

"It shocked me," he said of his ex-neighbor's arrest. "He was always a friendly guy." But at 1549 Fifth Ave. in Bay Shore, neighbors had a different take on him.

There, Acevedo had a confrontation with another tenant and the man's pregnant wife, said Wendy Cabrera, 32, who lives in the couple's old apartment. Paul Labron, the landlord, said Acevedo and his wife eventually were evicted for nonpayment of rent.

Santiago, Acevedo's wife, declined to be interviewed.

If he's convicted of the Yonkers slayings, Acevedo faces life in prison without chance of parole. He's charged with first- and second-degree murder in Moore's death, and second-degree counts in Hodges' and Ramos' slayings.

He also faces first-degree rape counts in all three cases.

Former Yonkers Detective Sgt. Frank LoCascio, who led the hunt with some 75 detectives over 16 years, said he was flabbergasted when he heard the suspect's name.

"It was like, 'Who? Francisco Acevedo?'" he said. "This guy never, ever, ever was on anybody's radar."