
Mistakes Of Law Enforcement On Norfolk Four Case

“The Confessions” Response

The case of the Norfolk Four illustrated the mistakes that law enforcement made to solve cases in the fastest way possible. It shined a light on the injustices enacted by the criminal justice system when it came to convicting innocent people.

After Michelle Bosko's murder in 1997, police interrogated four men for hours (up to eleven hours) using unconventional means and techniques. In the first interrogation with Danial Williams, he initially defended his innocence, but when his lie detector results came back negative, he confessed under pressure. The interrogation took eleven hours and Detective Ford used intimidating and aggressive methods to draw a faulty confession from Williams. This was repeated with the other suspects brought in for questioning. Each time the suspects' statements proved to be inconsistent and their DNA came back as not being a match, the police would draw out more names from the suspects they already had. At one point, they had seven people in police custody, and the police believed that they all gang raped and murdered Bosko. It was only when one of the men recanted his confession that the final three suspects were released, presumably with air-tight alibies. The police and interrogators were so determined to get an answer to the case that they even accepted clearly false statements of guilt.

In recent interviews with the now-released convicted suspects, they told viewers that they felt they only had two options in police interrogations. The first option was to lie and tell them what they wanted to hear: that they committed the murder. This option would enable them to live; they would be in prison, but they would not be given the death penalty. The second option was to tell the truth and say that they were innocent. In this case, they would most likely be convicted anyway and given the death penalty. So basically, they had to choose between living and dying. The harsh treatment and intimidation brought upon by the interrogators (mostly Detective Ford) forced the four men to confess to a crime they did not commit. Awful phrases such as “tell us the truth” and “you're going to die” added to the men's pressure to confess. Even when a current inmate in prison, Omar Ballard, confessed to committing the murder, the police still kept the four men in prison. This is an example of how the criminal justice system has failed in attaining justice when it comes to convicting innocent people.

The injustices served to innocent convicts continues even after being released from prison. The Norfolk Four were given conditional pardons; they were released from prison with a set of conditions. For example, one of these conditions was registering as sex offenders each year. In addition, they were registered as felons and could fail any background check. One of the consequences of this is that they cannot adopt children. This was the case for one of the four men, who could not adopt his wife's son because of his criminal record. The status of being a sex offender and an ex-convict also inhibits their abilities to acquire employment. In summary, because of the criminal justice system's faulty effort at getting justice, these four innocent men were subjected to years in prison, harsh treatment by police, and negative ramifications of their convictions.