

Is Circumstantial Evidence Enough In Chandra Levy Case?

10:57 PM, Nov 16, 2010

WASHINGTON, DC (WUSA) --- One of America's longest-running crime mysteries is now in the hands of jurors in DC Superior Court where 12 men and women get to decide whether Ingmar Guandique is guilty of killing federal intern Chandra Levy nine years ago.

Her body was discovered in Rock Creek Park a year after she disappeared in 2001 and nature had destroyed most of the physical evidence at the crime scene. Prosecutors, deprived of that evidence, had to build a largely circumstantial case against Guandique.

"D.C. juries tend to be very intelligent. They tend to be composed, as most juries are, (of) a wide variety of people from all walks of life. They tend to be pretty well educated but also have a lot of common sense.

"They're not just book-smart. They know what happens in reality on the street and they don't like these types of cases. They want to have hard physical evidence. They want to see pictures. They want to have DNA. They want to have fingerprints," said veteran D.C. defense attorney David Benowitz.

"This is a tough case for the prosecutors because juries these days want DNA and they want to know, absolutely, that Guandique was there, and the prosecutors can't prove that so they have to depend on circumstances here, circumstantial evidence, but circumstantial evidence is enough to convict if the jury believes it," said 9NEWS NOW reporter Bruce Leshan, who has covered the case the last nine years.

"The circumstances in this case are that Guandique has already admitted that he attacked two other women in Rock Creek Park and rolled them down a ravine and then was fought off.

"Those circumstances sound remarkably similar to what happened to Chandra Levy, to the Chandra Levy crime scene," Leshan said.

Prosecutors introduced testimony from a Guandique cellmate who said Guandique had confessed to the crime. Defense lawyers countered with another cellmate who said he never heard that.

"I think that there is the potential for reasonable doubt here because there are no eyewitnesses and because there is no DNA evidence. They certainly could find reasonable doubt but there is certainly evidence to convict him and in a horrible, horrible murder like this, I think it's fair to say that juries want somebody to be punished," Leshan said.