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Cell phone recording, images help convict teen who killed girlfriend

HOUSTON- A Houston teen who raped and murdered his girlfriend, then shared images of her lifeless body with his friends, was sentenced to life in prison this week.

Jesus Campos Jr., 18, killed his girlfriend Karen Perez, 15, in May of 2016. Perez was missing for three days when Campos told his father “she is not alive.”

Campos’ father took him to Houston Police to confess, but during questioning, he denied knowing where his girlfriend was, only that he last saw her at a taqueria the day before.

Three days after Perez disappeared, one teen came forward. He called Texas EquuSearch and revealed that he was part of a group of teens including Perez and Campos who went to an abandoned apartment complex after the taqueria. He told authorities that he and two other teens left and went back to school, but left Perez and Campos alone in the apartment. That was the last time he saw her alive.

Perez’s body was found hours after the tip came in, three days after she disappeared.

Campos stuck to the story of not knowing the whereabouts of Perez, however, investigators were able to search his phone and find images and a recording of the sexual assault and strangulation of Karen Perez. During the recording, Perez is heard crying and begging him not to kill her: “I don’t want to die, Jesus.”

“I’ve tried several capital murder cases,” Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Meriwether said. “But the recording of Karen being raped, and pleading for her life before she was so viciously murdered, will stay with me for the rest of my life.”

During trial, it was revealed that Campos shared graphic images of Perez after he killed her. The teens refused to turn him in; one stated in a text message “bros before hoes.”

The images and recording were shown in court; jurors found Jesus Campos Jr. guilty of capital murder in less than an hour. He was automatically sentenced to life in prison, with a possibility of parole after 40 years.

Perez was freshman at South Houston High School and had recently celebrated her 15th birthday.

ADAs Jennifer Meriwether and Cristina Platter prosecuted this case.

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