

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT OF POLICE INTERROGATION

Thank you for taking the initiative in wanting to find out more about my circumstances. It has been a daunting task in trying to prove my innocence for the past 17 years. Things haven't been easy for my family, friends, and especially myself. I've gone through my ups and downs, but due to my family and friends, I have found the courage to continue to strive for REAL JUSTICE not only for myself, but also the victims, family, and friends.

Below you will find a personal account of my story on how I've become to be where I'm at now, prison! I pray that after reading my story (whether you're a stranger, friend of the victim, eyewitness or even a family relative) you will believe that I'm truly INNOCENCE!

All I ask of you is to go into it with an open mind before deciding which way you want to sway. In the end, regardless of your decision, I only ask that you spread and share my story to bring awareness. I believe that with this awareness my story will fall upon the right person who has knowledge of who the real suspects are in this case. With this information and the individual(s) coming forth, I will finally be able to gain my freedom back by proving my innocence. Once again, thank you for your interest and support.

MATTHEW'S FACT(S)

On July 30, 1999 at the age of 17yrs I received a phone call by my younger sister S.M. informing me that some police officers recently paid a visit at my mother's place of residence in search of me. She stated that these officers and detectives wouldn't state why they were in search of me, but instead, only left a business card with their contact information. Upon hearing this I asked for the contact information so that I could contact them in order to find out what was going on?

It was surprising and quite alarming to me hearing about police showing up to my mother's house in search of me because I hadn't violated any laws or done anything wrong for some officers to be looking for me. After writing down the information given to me I immediately called the number and reached a receptionist. Once I explained the reason for me calling and inquired about the reason why I was being sought? I was told that she wouldn't be allowed to disclose this information over the telephone. I found this to be rather weird, but I informed her that I would be coming in shortly.

After hanging the phone up I contacted my sister for a second time and asked if she would be willing to drive me down to the police station. She was willing, so I gave her the directions on how to get to where I was staying at. About an hour later, my sister picked me up along with a friend of hers and drove me down to the Grand & Central Police Department located in Chicago, Illinois.

Upon arriving, I was instructed to report to the detective's unit just up the stairs. Once there I spoke to the same receptionist whom I had spoken to earlier and introduced myself. I was told to have a seat in the waiting area in the hallway and that the detectives would be with me shortly. I did as instructed. About less than a minute later, I was approached by two detectives who introduced themselves as G. Butler & A. Navarrete. After confirming that I was Matthew Echevarria, I informed them that I showed up because I had heard that they were looking for me and I wanted to know what was going on? I was

advised that all they wanted to do was talk to me and question me about some thing's that took place in the neighborhood where my mother lived, and I hung out in. Because I may or may not have some information that could help them.

I personally didn't see anything wrong with this and I, agreed to be interviewed. My sister seemed concerned and asked if I was in any kind of trouble? In response, the detectives stated no. My sister than asked if I needed a lawyer at which I felt at the time that she was a little too concerned. After all, I had no reason to be needing a lawyer. I hadn't done anything wrong. I thought that I was just in a position to be able to help the police out with some information. The detectives also didn't think I needed an attorney because they also spoke up and denied I needed one since I wasn't in any kind of trouble. All seemed fair I told my sister that I would contact her to come pick me back up. In the meantime, the detectives took down her information and told that I would be allowed a phone call when I needed one.

I was escorted to a interrogation room that wasn't big at all. Inside this room was a small steel bench connected to the wall, a steel ring bolted to the wall for the purpose of handcuffing individuals to it and bricks as a wall. I was told to have a seat and that they would be with me shortly. I was asked if I wanted anything to drink? But I declined. On their way out, I was advised that they would be locking the door not because of me but due to station protocol. I saw nothing wrong with it, but looking back these were all red flags. Being young and ignorant and not having anything to be concerned with I was clueless as to what was really taking place.

Not too long later, these same two detectives returned with some plastic chairs, notebook pads and coffee. Once they settled in the questions began to be asked. These questions were nothing more than the basic stuff like my age, height, weight, address, work, school etc. eventually the questions shifted to the type of people I hung out with, their names, do I know why I'm wanted for questioning? I answered them all except knowing why I was wanted for questioning, because I had no idea. I was told to really think hard because there is something that I'm not telling them. I was confused because I just got done answering all their questions truthfully? I informed them that I didn't know what they were talking about. This didn't seem to set well with them because they continued to insist that I was withholding information. I really didn't know how to respond because I was being truthful. Here I thought that I was going to be helping these detectives out with something, but instead this something was turning out to be directed towards me.

After some time of us going back and forth I began to become worried. At one point it was made known to me that a shooting had occurred and that an individual was shot and killed as a result of this. I didn't know how to react? Let alone why would they be accusing me of knowing about this? I explained to them that this was the first time I had ever heard about this and I voiced my thoughts as to why would they be asking me about this? In response, I was told that I was lying and had better give them the information they were seeking otherwise I'd be going down for it. I became really scared due to their aggressiveness, tactics, threats and stating that I had knowledge of this. At this moment I asked to be able to use the phone to call my mom or sister but was denied. I then asked for an attorney like you see

on TV but in response I was told, "what the fuck do you think this is TV or something, you're looking at 20-60 years in prison".

I was in scared! I began to become paranoid, suspicious and fearful for my life. I was surrounded by two grown men, stuck in a interrogation room being accused of having knowledge about a murder and denied to be able to contact my mother. I thought that police were people we could trust, but here I was fearful. I was scared, who wouldn't be? So much stuff was going through my head at that point. I didn't know who to trust? And nobody was coming to save me. I felt as if all I could do was try to convince them that I really had no knowledge of what they were talking about? Had I, trust me I would of.

I was constantly told that I was lying and that if I didn't tell them who did it? Well then, I would be going down for it. I begged, pleaded and swore that I didn't know what they were talking about. I even told them to contact my friends and ask them if they heard anything about this or me knowing or being involved with this. They wouldn't listen to what I had to say since it felt like it was going into one ear and out the other and because they kept threatening me to tell them who else was involved. Now the accusations started to shift from me at first having knowledge of who did it to me being there on the scene. I couldn't understand, believe or imagine why this was happening to me. I asked to be placed in a line up so that I could prove I wasn't lying. Unknown to me one had already been scheduled. I was told that if I wasn't identified I'd be released, this was a sense of relief to me. Finally, I could prove that I had no participation in this poor man's murder. I was left alone until the first line up was ready to begin. This first lineup took place about 42 hours after I had walked into the police station.

I was escorted to a room that contained a two-way mirror with a steel bench bolted to the wall that appeared to have been their forever due to the paint chips and engraving of many individuals before me. Inside this room were 4 other individuals already seated and a detective seated in a chair watching over us. I was told to pick any spot I wanted on the bench. When the lineup began each of us were called up to the two-way mirror and individuals to face left, right and forward again before returning to our seat. After this procedure was completed, I was the only individual instructed to repeat the procedure twice.

Once the lineup was completed we all waited for another line-up to be conducted. Again, I was the only individual made to repeat the procedure. Afterwards we were all taken out of this room and instructed to stand together so that a picture could be taken. I was then brought back to the interrogation room handcuffed to the steel ring bolted to the wall and told that I was identified, so this was my last chance to speak up and tell them who did it. I continued to deny any knowledge and informed detectives that if I knew I would. It was Stated by these detectives that "You see how easy this is to put you on the scene, now tell us what we need to know" But I really didn't have a clue what they were talking about? I first learned about the murder while at the station.

I was left inside this interrogation room cuffed to the wall for more than 20 hours deprived of sleep, interrogated, threaten, and cold. I couldn't remember the last time I had slept? At one point I started to question myself. Did I really commit this murder and just don't remember it? Maybe I blocked it out of

my mind. I attempted to play out what was disclosed to me by detectives, but it just wasn't adding up. I'd remember going there, getting into a confrontation with some guys or even running from the scene. How could you forget something as serious as that? If anything, you'd remember being on the run! I didn't use drugs and barely drank beer so that was out of the question. In the end I knew that I hadn't done anything wrong. But because I was scared, exhausted, stressed, deprived of sleep and fighting for my life, I seriously believe that anybody's mind would play tricks on them.

When the detectives came in for their shift I was constantly interrogated and finally taken down to lock up where it was really, really cold. On August 1st, 1999 I was brought up to the interrogation room again and made to participate in yet another daunting line up against my will. But before doing so I was given a beige t-shirt to wear. After these next line-ups were completed, I was advised that I had been identified. I was escorted back to the interrogation room and consistently threaten, promised, interviewed until I had enough. I refused to answer question(s) because I was tired and didn't want anything to do with these detectives. All I wanted was to be able to see my mother and tell her what these detectives were doing to me.

At some point I was seen by a state's attorney and I asked to speak to her privately because I didn't feel comfortable in the presence of the detectives. At first, she stated that she couldn't do it but later had the detective step out for a minute. I didn't know that she was there to charge me, but instead, thought she was an attorney. I started explaining to her what was going on and what I've been going through which is when she broke it down explaining to me who she was. She advised me not to say anything and to ask for a lawyer once she called the detectives back in.

When the detectives were called back in she asked if I had anything to state? I replied that I didn't and that I wanted an attorney. She then left. She never charged me with the murder. Hour(s) later, another states attorney came to speak to me but this time I knew not to speak. I invoked my 5th amendment right and requested to have an attorney present. When she left, I was formerly charged with a First-Degree Murder. I was booked into lockup and finally escorted to the Cook County Jail on August 2nd, 1999, 62½ hours later.

I stayed in the Cook County Jail for 2 years and 7 months waiting to go to trial. In February 2002, I was legally found guilty by a jury and eventually sentenced to 50 years in prison. In these past 16 years I have been appealing my conviction and sentence with no positive results. I'm now reaching out to public for your support in helping me obtain my freedom through proof of my innocence. If you're interested in helping out, please send a message using my contact page.

Thank You,

Matthew