

Elaborate the role of eyewitness identification with the aid of Ronald Cotton Eyewitness Identification case. Provide the facts to support your position and also give recommendations regarding eyewitness identification.

Eyewitness identification plays an important role in determining the fate of the case. It is pertinent to mention here that the eyewitness is paramount concerning the criminal justice system of the United States. He is the one who has actually seen an event and testifies in his evidence before the court. This system is prevailing worldwide for identifying the perpetrator of the crime. But, there are certain issues with eyewitness identification that may lead to wrongful convictions. Ronald Ross Cotton's eyewitness identification case is paramount in this regard. Ronald was convicted of sexual assault based on a phone line-up identification. But, he was later proved innocent by medical science, including the DNA evidence. The eyewitness identification can be misleading as it may consist of unconscious memory distortion and biases even among the most confident witnesses. After going through research, I found that the identification of culprits throughout eyewitnesses is not reliable. It may help in deciding the fate of the case. But, it should not be considered as a sole piece of evidence (Thompson-Cannino et al., 2009).

Facts supporting my position

I would base my argument on the following grounds, considering the eyewitness identification in Ronald Cotton case:

In the said case, a twenty-two years old college student was raped on a humid night in North Carolina in 1984. In this case, the officer did not take the confidence statement after a stranger broke into Thompson's apartment. Miss Thompson identified Ronald as a culprit with the help of a sketch. After thorough research and watching videos, I found that Miss Thompson was persuaded

by the detected and she did not make her decision in an open-ended way (Jones, 2012). The identification procedure was badly affected by the dramatic role of cues in the case which resulted in Mr. Ronald's conviction. But, he was acquitted after a decade on the basis of DNA evidence. The results of forensic were surprising as they matched with another convict named Bobby Poole. On this basis, Mr. Ronald was set free and released in 1995 after serving about ten years in imprisonment (Jones, 2012).

Mr. Ronald lost his ten precious years of life-based on the wrongful conviction that was established on the basis of eyewitness identification. Hence, this form of identification should not be the sole basis of conviction, considering the fact that the vague memory of the witness can lead to an obnoxious situation.

Secondly, Miss Thompson was suffering from a post-trauma of rape. She had made his ulterior motive to see the culprit behind the bars. The sketch added more potential suspicion. But, the striking fact of Bobby's resemblance with Mr. Ronald was ignored in deciding the case. Ronald was presented before the court instead of the actual culprit that was resulted out of physical similarity between the two suspects. The police erred in identifying the real culprit and picked the wrong person in the lineup. It is pertinent to mention here that Miss Thompson was not telling a lie. She was telling the truth as per her memory. But, memory weakens over time and the lighting conditions also add to the uncertainty of the identification. Hence, eyewitness identification may serve as the basis of conviction but in the presence of other substantial pieces of evidence (Thompson-Cannino et al., 2009).

Recommendations

I believe that there is a need to train all law enforcement officers dealing with eyewitness identification. National Research Council also suggests that a person's memory goes through a series of events and may fade after a particular period of time. A variety of changes occur with memory over time, including distortion, reconstruction, and recondition. It is pertinent to mention here that the witness can also get influenced by the external factors that may hamper the evidence (Jones, 2012).

Furthermore, the police need to ask open-ended, and non-leading questions that avoid suggestiveness. I recommend the photo array procedures and double-blind lineup for getting positive and beneficial results in such cases. The police should understand their responsibility in bringing the suspect before the eyewitness for identification. The similarity in appearance may result in a failure to identify the actual culprit (Podgor, 2003).

Conclusion

To recapitulate, I conclude that eyewitness identification should not be dealt with as the sole piece of evidence to convict a suspect. However, it has evidentiary value but should be aided with corroborative evidence. The police department needs to enhance its capabilities in this regard and conform to the latest technologies, including the double-blind lineup. I believe that the Ronald Ross Cotton case is an example and should be treated as a precedent for police officials in dealing with such cases. The Department of Justice and the United States legal system should conform to itself in such a way to avoid such incidents in the future (Clark, 2012).

References

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