Beat: Local

Florida executes man whose case tightened sex offender laws

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USPA News - Juan Carlos Chavez, a Cuban immigrant who was convicted of the brutal 1995 rape and murder of nine-year-old Jimmy Ryce, a high-profile case that led to stronger confinement laws for sexual predators, was executed at a prison in Florida on late Wednesday, state officials said. Chavez, 46, received a lethal injection at the Florida State Prison in Railford and was pronounced dead at 8:17 p.m. local time on Wednesday. The execution took place more than two hours later than scheduled due to a last-minute appeal that was soon rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The convicted murderer made no final statement in the death chamber but instead submitted something in writing, though it was riddled with grammar mistakes. "I doubt that there is anything I can say that would satisfy everybody, even less those who see in me nothing more that someone deserving of punishment," he wrote. "We men are slow to learn that since none of us is righteous, none of us can pass judgment in another man sins. Thus, no word or man will rob me of my peace today for I know in my heart that through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death, that no one who trust in God`s promises is ever abandoned," he said. Chavez continued: "My deliverance I know will come, if not in this life then in death and the life to come. Today my redeemer bring peace to my heart so I cannot wish for everybody else, therefore I beg my Lord the Christ in these my last minutes of this world. That his unfailing love be upon us, upon me, upon those who today take the life out of this body, as well as those who in their blindness or in their pain desire my death." It was 18 years ago that Chavez abducted, raped, and murdered Jimmy Ryce on September 11, 1995, in Miami-Dade County. Chavez was found guilty on one count of first-degree murder, one count of sexual battery upon a person less than 12 years old, and one count of armed kidnapping. He was sentenced to death on November 23, 1998. According to prosecutors, Chavez ordered Jimmy Ryce into his truck at gunpoint after the boy was dropped off by his school bus near his home. Chavez then drove the boy to his trailer, where he ordered Jimmy to remove his clothes before raping him. When Jimmy tried to escape more than 3.5 hours later, Chavez shot and killed the child. Two days after the murder, Chavez dismembered Jimmy`s body, filled three planters with Jimmy`s remains, and sealed the planters with concrete. Chavez was arrested three months later after Jimmy`s book bag was discovered in his trailer. Following Chavez`s conviction, Florida lawmakers passed the Jimmy Ryce Act (Jimmy Ryce Involuntary Civil Commitment for Sexually Violent Predators` Treatment and Care Act) in 1998. Under the law, sexual predators whom are considered to be "highly dangerous" can be detained through civil commitment to a secure facility for treatment, even after they have served their prison sentences. This law, however, would not have saved Jimmy, as Chavez had no previous record of sex crimes.

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