

Juan Rivera's \$20 Million Compensation Will Be Divided In Divorce Court

On January 25, 2017 the Illinois Supreme Court [declined to review](#) a ruling by the Illinois Court of Appeal that Juan Rivera's \$20 million wrongful conviction lawsuit settlement is marital property in his pending divorce.

Melissa Sanders married Rivera on October 31, 2000. At the time he was imprisoned for life in Illinois for his 1998 murder conviction in the 1992 rape and murder of 11-year-old Holly Staker in Waukegan, Illinois. Sanders had met Rivera in 1998 after she had taken an interest in the law, and volunteered to work on his case.

Sanders was a staunch advocate of Rivera's innocence. After years of legal proceedings, which included Rivera's reconviction in 1999, on December 9, 2011 the Illinois Appellate Court [overturned Rivera's conviction](#) on the basis his confession was unreliable and without it there was not enough evidence to support his conviction.

Justice Denied published an article about Rivera's release: "[Juan Rivera Released From 19 Year 'Nightmare Of Wrongful Incarceration'](#)".

The Cook County State's Attorney's Office

Zisa cont. from page 10

defendant's motion is granted. The sole pending count is dismissed with prejudice." [108-109]

[Click here to read State of New Jersey v. Charles Kenneth Zisa](#), No. 10-10-01812-i (Superior Ct Bergen County, 8-23-2016).

Sources:

[State v. Zisa](#), No. A-0653-12T4 2105 N.J. Super. Unpub. LEXIS 1842 (App. Div. July 31, 2015) (Reversing insurance fraud conviction for evidence insufficiency, and affirming trial court's judgment of acquittal on counts 3, 10 & 13.)

[State of New Jersey v. Charles Kenneth Zisa](#), No. 10-10-01812-i (Superior Ct Bergen County, 8-23-2016)

[Former Hackensack chief, state assemblyman Ken Zisa](#) sentenced to five years in prison, *NJ Advance Media*, September 20, 2012

[Zisa ex-gal pal gets pre-trial intervention for insurance fraud](#), *Hackensack Daily Voice*, June 22, 2012

[Judge dismisses remaining criminal charge](#) against ex-Hackensack police chief Zisa, *The Record* (Bergen County, NJ), August 23, 2016



Juan Rivera with wife Melissa Sanders-Rivera at Northwestern U. Law School January 2012. (Abel Uribe, Chicago Tribune)

than 19 years and two months in custody.

In October 2012 Rivera filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against Lake County, the City of Waukegan, and other defendants, that alleged violations of his constitutional rights.

In 2014 Rivera was granted \$213,000 compensation by the State of Illinois.

Rivera filed a petition in May 2014 to dissolve his marriage to Melissa, and she filed a counter-petition in July 2014.

While their divorce was pending, it was announced in March 2015 that Rivera's lawsuit was settled for \$20 million. Lake County agreed to pay \$12.5 million, and the City of Waukegan agreed to pay \$7.5 million.

Rivera was to receive \$11.36 million after the deduction of \$8.64 for legal fees and costs to his lawyers.

In May 2015 Rivera filed a motion in his divorce case that sought to exclude Melissa from receiving any money from either the lawsuit settlement or Illinois' compensation. He argued he was convicted of crimes that occurred in 1992 -- eight years prior to his marriage.

Melissa countered the motion by making claims that included [arguing the money](#) "is marital property because the lawsuit accrued during the marriage."

The divorce court judge sided with Rivera and granted his motion.

Melissa appealed.

On September 30, 2016 the Illinois Appellate Court [reversed the judge's decision](#), in ruling the lawsuit settlement is marital property, and Melissa has a right to a share of the settlement.

Justice Denied published an article in Octo-

ber 2016 about the divorce case: "[Juan Rivera's Wrongful Conviction Lawsuit Settlement Is Marital Property In Divorce](#)."

Rivera sought review of the ruling by the Illinois Supreme Court.

On January 25, 2017 the Supreme Court announced it [would not review](#) the appeals court's ruling.

Juan and Melissa-Sanders Rivera's divorce trial [is scheduled to](#) begin on July 18, 2017 in the Cook County Circuit Court's domestic relations division.

Sources:

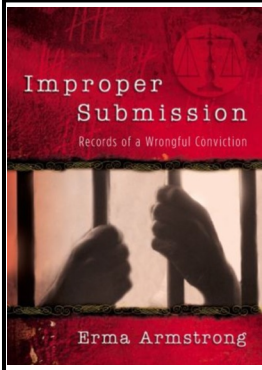
[\\$20 million wrongful conviction settlement headed for divorce court](#), *Chicago Tribune*, January 27, 2017

Juan Rivera's Wrongful Conviction Lawsuit Settlement Is Marital Property In Divorce, *Justice Denied*, Oct. 16, 2016

"Juan Rivera Released From 19 Year 'Nightmare Of Wrongful Incarceration'", *Justice Denied*, February 7, 2012

[People v. Rivera](#), 962 NE 2d 53 (Ill. Appellate Court, 2nd Dist., 12-9-2011)





This is the story of Karlyn Eklof, a young woman delivered into the hands of a psychotic killer. She witnessed him commit a murder and she is currently serving two life sentences in Oregon for that crime. *Improper Submission* by Erma Armstrong documents:

- The way the killer's psychotic bragging was used by the prosecution against Karlyn.
- The way exculpatory and witness impeachment evidence was hidden from the defense.
- The way erroneous assertions by the prosecution were used by the media, judges reviewing the case, and even by her own lawyers to avoid looking at the record that reveals her innocence.

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