



Monday, June 8, 2020

Familial DNA Leads to Indictment of Cleveland Man Accused of September 2018 Murder in Slavic Village

CLEVELAND – Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that a grand jury has returned an indictment against Jamal Kukla, 26, for murdering a Cleveland woman, 31, in September 2018.

"This horrendous crime has left the victim's family suffering with numerous questions for nearly two years," said Prosecutor O'Malley. "Thanks to the coordinated efforts of law enforcement agencies at every level, hopefully some of those questions will soon be answered."

Kukla has been indicted on the following charges:

- **Two counts of Aggravated Murder**
- **One count of Murder**
- **One count of Kidnapping**
- **One count of Felonious Assault**
- **One count of Gross Abuse Of A Corpse**
- **One count of Tampering With Evidence**

"More and more, familial analysis positively links DNA evidence from a crime scene to a suspect, providing investigators with leads that crack a case," Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said. "I'm thankful that our Bureau of Criminal Investigations team was able to assist our local and federal partners in solving this brutal homicide."

"This indictment is further proof of the effectiveness of the Homicide Review Task Force," said Cleveland Police Chief Calvin D. Williams. "The Task Force, which includes investigators from the Cleveland Office of the FBI, has been an abundant resource for our Homicide Unit from the day it was implemented."

On September 17, 2018, a maintenance man employed by a church near Engel Avenue and Broadway Avenue discovered the victim's body underneath a set of steps and called police. Officers with the Cleveland Division of Police's (CDP) Homicide Unit and investigators with the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office (CCME) immediately responded and processed the scene.

The CCME ruled the death a homicide due to blunt force head trauma and tested DNA evidence collected from the scene utilizing the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) – a national DNA database created and maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The database stores DNA profiles of any individual that is arrested on felony charges. If a match is produced, BCI sends a "hit letter" notifying the submitting law enforcement agency so that they can follow up with further investigation if necessary.

An initial match was not found, but additional leads were pursued by the Cleveland Homicide Review Task Force – whose members include detectives, agents, and analysts from CDP and the FBI. After further investigation, the case was identified as a candidate for BCI's familial DNA search tool, which mines CODIS to find DNA that may match that of an offender's relative. A familial DNA match was found and Kukla was identified as a potential suspect.

Law enforcement officials obtained Kukla's DNA and sent it for testing. His DNA matched that of the crime scene and an arrest warrant was issued. On May 27, 2020, he was apprehended by CDP and the FBI.

He remains incarcerated at the Cuyahoga County Jail on \$1 million cash/surety/property bond. He is scheduled to be arraigned at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 11.