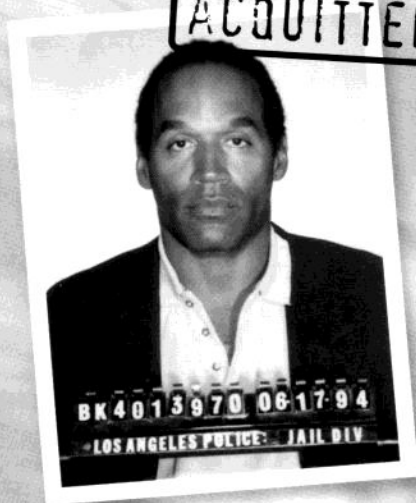


ACQUITTED

**POLICE MUGSHOT ▲**

*OJ Simpson's arrest at age 46 for his ex-wife's murder wasn't his first brush with the law. He was convicted of beating her six years earlier, and sentenced to community work and probation.*

**IT'S IN THE BAG ▼**

*The defense team claimed investigators didn't change their gloves between handling Simpson's blood sample and bagging crime-scene evidence. So Simpson's DNA may have contaminated this glove.*

# OJ Simpson on trial

When Nicole Brown Simpson was found dead at her Los Angeles home, suspicion fell on former husband OJ Simpson. But at his hugely publicized trial, the faded sports celebrity was not the only one accused. Police procedures and evidence handling were also on trial.

It was Nicole's dog who raised the alarm on the night of June 12, 1994. Neighbors had heard howling from 10:15 PM onward, and eventually found the white Akita covered in blood. It led them to the gate of 875 South Bundy Drive, in the desirable LA suburb of Brentwood. Through the gate, they saw a row of bloody footprints. Beyond, highlighted by the porch light, Nicole's body lay slumped in a spreading pool of blood.

**Police on the scene**

An LAPD squad car arrived just after midnight, and patrolmen opened the gate to take a closer look. Nicole had been ferociously attacked, almost decapitated. Nearby, her friend Ronald Goldman was also found dead from a frenzied stabbing. Scattered around were items including a hat and a bloodstained left-hand glove. Inside the house they found Nicole's sons, age six and nine, fast asleep.

The uniformed officers telephoned their report and triggered wake-up

calls to homicide detectives. Gathering at the scene, they then drove to Simpson's palatial home, five minutes away on Rockingham Avenue. House lights were on, but nobody answered the door. Calling at a bungalow in the grounds woke Simpson's daughter, who let detectives into the house. A guest, Kato Kaelin, had been sleeping in another bungalow.

He told detectives that Simpson had taken a night flight to Chicago. Kaelin had helped to load luggage into an airport limo just before 11 PM.

While buzzing the intercom, detectives noticed blood on Simpson's Ford Bronco parked outside. They then saw a trail of drips leading from the car to the mansion's front door. Detective Mark Fuhrman also found another bloodstained glove that matched the one found near Nicole's body.

**"THEY'RE TOO TIGHT" ►**

*Simpson had trouble wearing a key piece of evidence. The prosecution claimed the gloves had shrunk, but the jury believed the defense slogan "if it doesn't fit, you must acquit."*

Dawn broke as police called Simpson at his Chicago hotel. He sounded distraught but strangely incurious about his ex-wife's death. He agreed to catch the next flight back, and by lunchtime detectives were interviewing him. As they talked, they noticed a bandage on his hand. He'd cut it some time before, he told them, and a broken glass in his Chicago hotel room had reopened the wound.

The detectives photographed his hand, and fingerprinted him. The nurse then took his blood for DNA tests, squirted the sample into a vial containing a preservative, EDTA, and handed it to the detectives. Simpson was then free to go.

Meanwhile, the investigation had been continuing at the two crime scenes. To try to preempt defense challenges, the search of Simpson's house was videotaped. By mid-afternoon, the detectives who had interviewed Simpson joined the rest of the investigating team at Rockingham Avenue. At 5:20 PM they handed over the vial of blood to be logged and packed away with the other crime-scene evidence.

### Mass media attention

In the four days that followed, the case became a media circus: Simpson's arrest was famously preceded by a slow-motion police car chase around the LA freeway system. It was clear that the trial was going to attract immense news interest.

When it began seven months later, the State seemed to have a compelling case against Simpson. He had no alibi, and hair and fiber evidence linked him to the hat found at the murder scene. DNA analysis showed that blood on a sock found in Simpson's bedroom was Nicole's, and that the car and the right-hand glove were stained with blood from Simpson and both victims. As the Deputy District Attorney put it, "That trail of blood from Bundy through his own Ford Bronco and into his house on Rockingham

is devastating proof of his guilt."

However, Simpson had hired a crack legal team. From the start, they painted a picture of a white racist detective trying to frame an innocent, if bullying, black defendant. Detective Mark Fuhrman's evidence was fatally compromised when the jury heard a tape recording in which he used racial slurs 41 times. In addition, the defense alleged that the detectives had both the means and opportunity to frame Simpson.

About a quarter-teaspoonful of his blood sample had vanished before being logged as evidence. The defense suggested that detectives had ample time to smear it around the crime scene. Worse, some of the crime-scene samples contained traces of EDTA. The glove could have been planted—and didn't even fit Simpson. Finally, there was the video of the search. Far from preempting defense objections, it showed certain police procedures that reinforced them (see box).

However, the prosecution could explain many apparent shortcomings in their case: small traces of EDTA, for example, occur naturally in blood. But the jury, exhausted by a nine-month trial in the news spotlight, and baffled by much of the expert testimony, was not convinced. They took just six hours to clear Simpson of the murder.

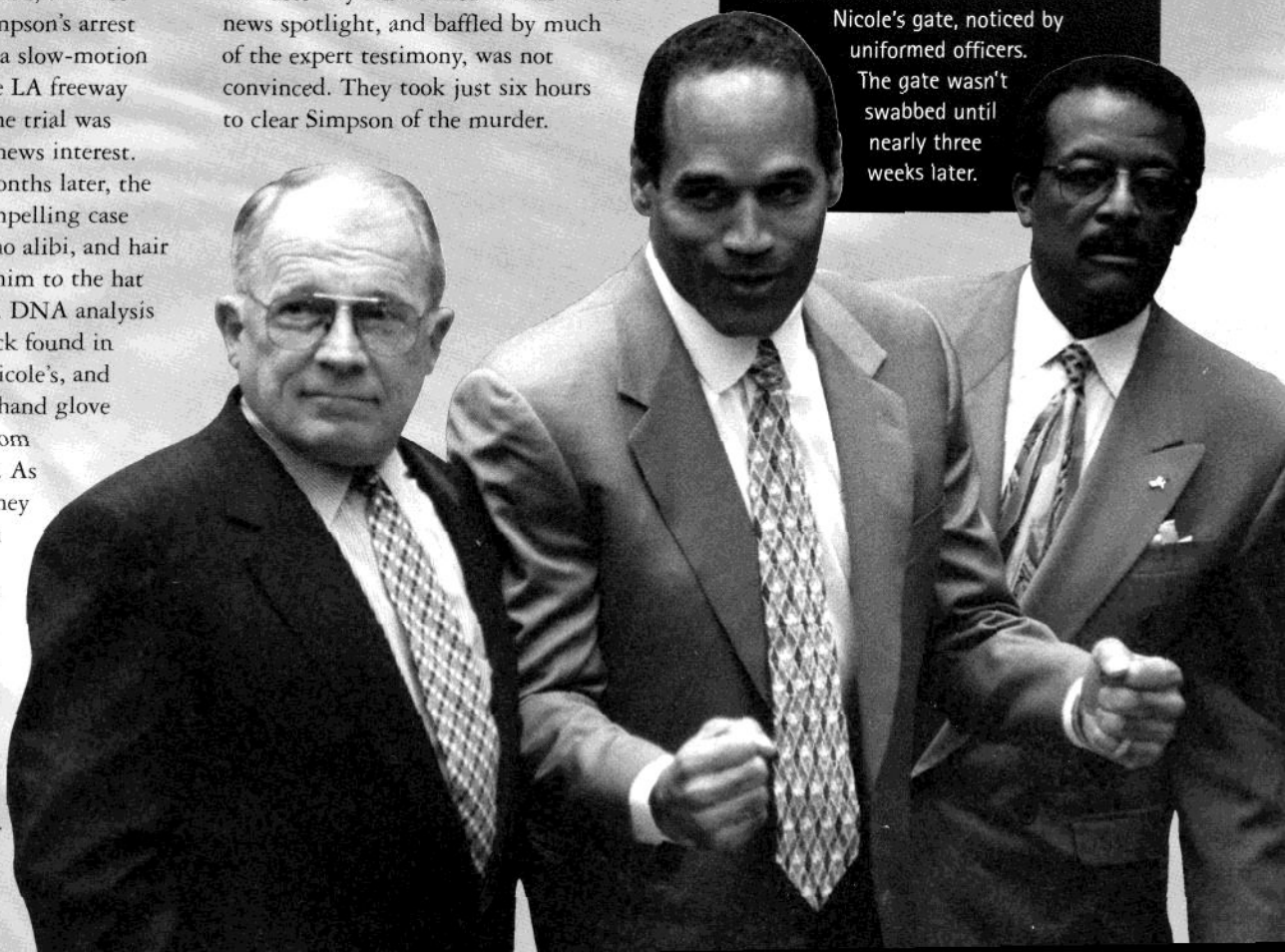
## AT THE SCENE



Certain police procedures undermined the prosecution case. Uniformed officers used Nicole's telephone to report the homicide, possibly destroying fingerprint evidence. When detectives arrived, one covered Nicole's corpse with a blanket, to hide it from news cameras, thus potentially compromising fiber evidence. The above image of an investigator pointing to the bloodstained leather glove shows that he hasn't taken basic precautions of wearing sterile coveralls and gloves. The police video captured more blunders, showing a junior investigator dropping blood swabs and wiping tweezers with soiled hands.

Detectives also missed bloodstains on Nicole's gate, noticed by uniformed officers.

The gate wasn't swabbed until nearly three weeks later.



### NOT GUILTY! ▶

Lawyer F. Lee Bailey, Simpson, and attorney Johnnie Cochran (l-r) celebrate the verdict. But a civil court found him guilty, and awarded \$33 million in damages.