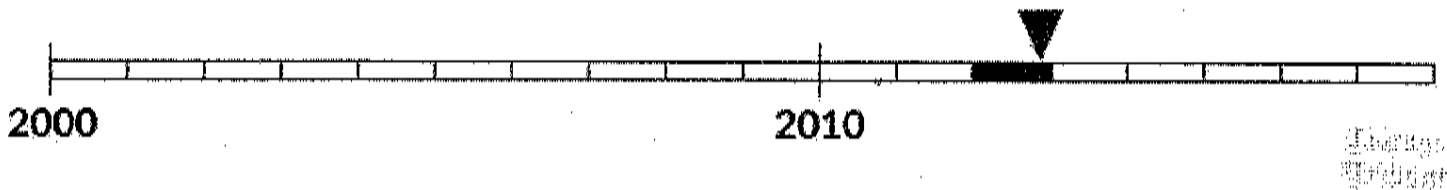
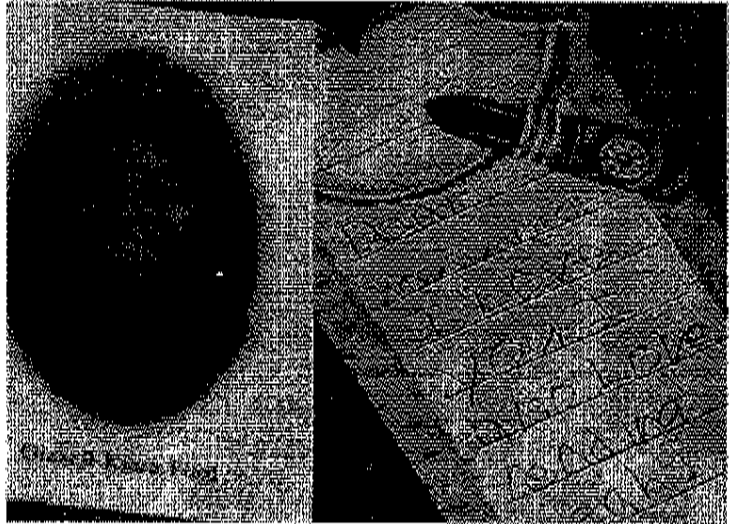


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# Jurors in doctor's civil trial overwhelmed by photos, details of 8-year-old's torture slaying

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A timeline of Gizzell Ford's short life.

By **Steve Schmadeke**  
Chicago Tribune

DECEMBER 7, 2017, 6:40 PM

**A**n emotionally charged civil trial related to the torture slaying of 8-year-old Gizzell Ford was paused soon after it began Thursday when a juror hearing of the horrific injuries the fourth-grader had suffered began sobbing during opening remarks.

Jurors are being asked to determine if Dr. Norell Rosado, a respected child abuse pediatrician who examined Gizzell a few weeks before her 2013 death, was negligent in failing to alert authorities to possible signs of abuse and was therefore a cause of her death.

But jurors appeared overwhelmed as they saw photos and heard details about the brutal end to the girl's promising life as the trial started.

They were not the first to react with such emotion — a Chicago police forensic investigator with 30 years on the job wept from the witness stand during a criminal trial earlier this year after viewing the same photos.

On Thursday, a burly male juror with a neck tattoo began crying as several of the other 14 jurors fought back tears inside a Daley Center courtroom soon after the family's attorney, Martin Dolan, told them the 70-pound girl had been found covered head to toe in bruises and with an open, maggot-infested wound on the back of her head. He also showed them three photos of the girl's badly beaten body, which was found clad only in torn green underwear in her grandmother's cockroach-infested West Side apartment in 2013.

Gizzell's grandmother Helen Ford is serving a life sentence for the girl's strangulation slaying. Gizzell's mother, Sandra Mercado, and her maternal grandfather, Juan Mercado, who attended trial Thursday, filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Rosado.

"Judge, I need a tissue," said the male juror who had lowered his head to cry, interrupting opening remarks by Rosado's attorney a few minutes later. Trial Judge James M. Varga called for a quick halt to the trial and at least four jurors left to compose themselves. Two female jurors returned with a handful of tissues.

Assistant State's Attorney Meg Inskeep, who is representing Rosado, tried to address the raw emotions in the courtroom as she restarted her opening remarks.

"There's no denying that Gizzell Ford suffered a horrific death," she said. "I see many of you getting emotional and crying. Believe me, I want to cry too.

"The facts are nobody has a crystal ball. The only one who could've stopped this from happening was Helen Ford."

Inskeep put her hand on Rosado's left shoulder as she explained his prominent position in the field as one of just 350 doctors in the country certified in child abuse treatment. She said Rosado, now on staff at Lurie Children's Hospital, regularly is called on to train other physicians to detect signs of child abuse.

She said his meticulousness — finding two scabbed-over scratches on Gizzell's thigh and a possible healing loop mark on her buttock that a nurse standing next to him couldn't see — is now being used against him. She said he didn't report any signs of abuse because he never found any.

"Dr. Rosado didn't see any signs of abuse because on the day he saw her there were no reportable signs of abuse," she said.

Inskeep said Gizzell's third-grade teacher, one of the last to see her alive before she went on summer break, will testify that when she saw the girl several days after Rosado's exam she saw no apparent signs of abuse.

But retired pediatrician Dr. Edith V. Barnes testified as a plaintiff's expert Thursday that Rosado should have recognized the girl's injuries as signs of child abuse and immediately notified a social worker who could have removed Gizzell from her home while an investigation was conducted.

And attorney Dolan said in his opening remarks that a nurse went back into Gizzell's file and made changes, which he did not detail, after learning the girl had died. "The first thing they think of is to go back and cover

their tracks," he said.

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I be here," Dolan said in his remarks to jurors.  
mother."

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