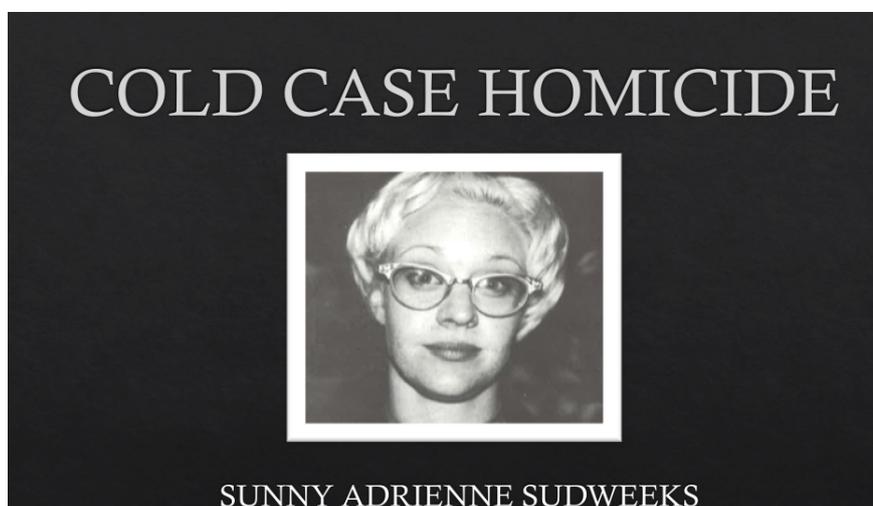


# Costa Mesa Police announce they have suspect in 20-year-old murder-rape cold case of OCC student

The Costa Mesa Police Department in a press conference Thursday morning identified the suspect in the 1997 cold case rape-murder of 26-year-old Sunny Adrienne Sudweeks.



The identity of the suspect has been unknown until recently and after extensive follow-up investigation and exhausting all avenues to capture the suspect, CMPD hopes to bring the suspect to justice by making his identity known.

Felipe Vianney Hernandez Tellez, 43, has been identified as the homicide suspect who raped and murdered Sudweeks in 1997.

[Click here](#) for a Spanish language version of the press release.

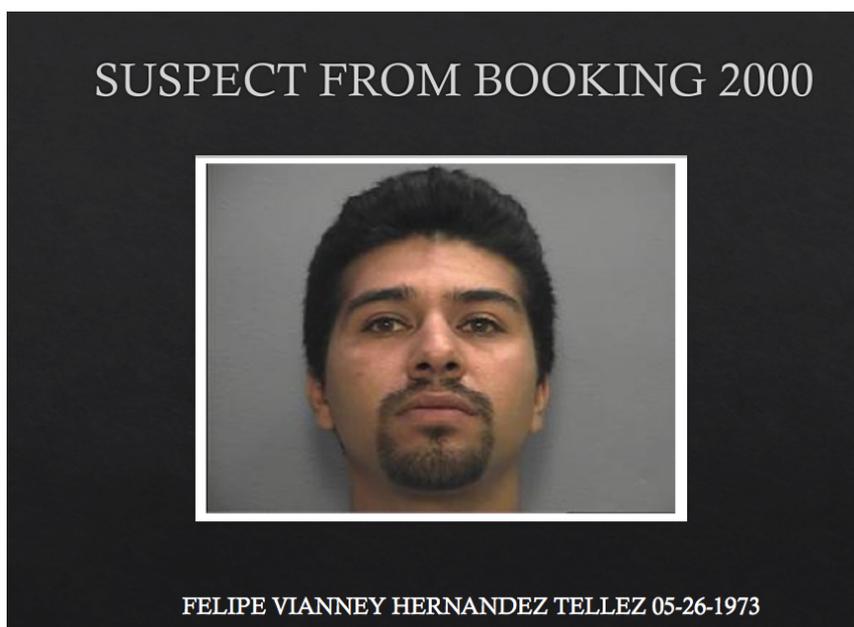
CMPD was assisted in this investigation by the Orange County Cold Case Task Force, the Orange County Crime Lab, the Orange County District Attorney's (OCDA) TrackRS Unit, U.S. Marshals Service, Santa Ana ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations

Unit, Santa Ana School Police, and the California Department of Justice.

“While we can never make up for the loss associated with this heinous and vile crime, my hope is that we can provide some sense of closure and make life a little easier for the Sudweeks family,” said Chief of Police Robert N. Sharpnack. “My staff worked hard to get to this point but we will not stop until this despicable individual is behind bars.”

### **Felipe Vianney Hernandez Tellez**

At the time of the murder, Hernandez, then 23 years old, was living in Santa Ana but had previously lived in Costa Mesa from approximately 1991 to 1993.



Two years prior to the murder, Hernandez was arrested on Dec. 4, 1995, by Newport Beach Police Department and his fingerprints were collected. He was subsequently charged and convicted of second-degree burglary.

He was also arrested on May 20, 2000, by the Santa Ana Police Department and subsequently charged and convicted for domestic violence. His fingerprints were placed in the fingerprint database in 2000.

In 2006, Hernandez fled the United States, and returned to Mexico. It is believed that he currently lives somewhere in the state of Oaxaca with his new family to include his wife and three children. He is possibly living near the resort town of Puerto Escondido. He previously worked as a painter and currently delivers rotisserie chickens to customers. Hernandez frequents his mother's home in Huitzuco, Guerrero.

### **Murder of Sudweeks**

Sudweeks was a 26-year-old photography student at Orange Coast College and worked part-time at an Aaron Brothers. At the time of the murder, she was living with her boyfriend and a roommate, who both worked night shifts as cab drivers.

On the night of Feb. 22, 1997, Sudweeks was home in her upstairs apartment in the 1000 block of Mission Drive in Costa Mesa. That night, she had several phone conversations, and evidence shows that her last conversation with a girlfriend took place around 11:00 p.m.

On Feb. 23, 1997, between 12:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m., it is believed that Hernandez entered Sudweeks' upstairs apartment where the victim was sleeping in one of the three bedrooms and raped and murdered Sudweeks by strangling her. It is believed that Hernandez then subsequently fled the scene.

Sudweeks' boyfriend and roommate returned early that morning to find Sudweeks' body lying in her bed. Her boyfriend immediately called 911. At approximately 4:55 a.m., CMPD officers and detectives arrived at the scene and began their investigation.

[Click here to see a slideshow from the press conference.](#)

### **Investigation and Identification of the Suspect**

Over the course of the initial investigation, CMPD collected over 130 DNA samples and 265 pieces of evidence. They

canvassed the area and conducted extensive interviews, passed out police bulletin fliers, and distributed a press release regarding the murder. A month after the homicide, fingerprints from the crime scene were input into the fingerprint database but returned no match. The DNA sample that was collected returned a profile but no name in the DNA database. With no leads to pursue, the case went cold.

Between 1997 and 2009, CMPD conducted due diligence reviews of the case file but found nothing new to advance the case.

In 2009, the case was reviewed due to new developments in DNA technology. CMPD and then-Deputy District Attorney Camille Hill, who specialized in DNA, conducted a DNA review. The case remained cold with no leads to a suspect.

Between 2010 and 2016, CMPD routinely reviewed the case file. In 2011, 2012, and 2014, the suspect's DNA was run in a state database for a familial match but no match was made.

In November 2016, Parabon NanoLabs provided CMPD with a detailed "Snapshot Prediction Results Composite Profile" including physical identifiers of the suspect such as a facial composite, skin color, eye color, hair color, freckles, sex, and ancestry. Around that time, CMPD ran fingerprints in the fingerprint database, which returned a hit to Hernandez from a prior arrest and conviction. With that promising lead, CMPD focused on Hernandez and pulled his 2000 booking photo. The snapshot provided by Parabon NanoLabs and the booking photo of Hernandez were strikingly similar.

In January and February 2017, CMPD detectives conducted interviews of Hernandez's family members and obtained DNA from a relative. Both the relative's DNA and the DNA collected from the 1997 crime scene were tested and returned with a high likelihood that the relative and the perpetrator who killed Sudweeks were related. The investigation, including DNA and fingerprints, led CMPD detectives to believe that Hernandez is

the suspect that raped and murdered Sudweeks.

CMPD will submit the case to the OCDA for charges and will continue to work with law enforcement partners to locate Hernandez and extradite him back to Orange County to face justice.