

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

Case Number: 21-01099CFANO

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Plaintiff,

VS.

CORNELIUS TREVON WHITFIELD,

Defendant.

DEPOSITION OF:

NADINE ULLOA

TAKEN BY:

Counsel for the Defendant

DATE:

February 13, 2025

TIME:

10:35 a.m. - 10:58 a.m.

PLACE:

ZOOM Videoconference

REPORTED BY:

Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR
Notary Public, State of FL

Pages 1 - 22

JTP REPORTING (727)422-8287

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EXHIBITS

(No exhibits were marked for identification.)

1 WHEREUPON,

2 NADINE ULLOA

3 (the deponent herein, being first duly sworn, was examined
4 and testified as follows:)

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY MS. SEIFER-SMITH:

7 Q Can you please state your name for the record.

8 A My name is Nadine Ulloa. My last name is
9 spelled U-L-L-O-A.

10 Q Two silent Ls. Love it. Thank you for doing
11 that. We're here in the matter of Cornelius Whitfield.
12 Our court case number 21-01099CF. I have as a lab number
13 from the Pinellas County Forensic Lab 21-001019. Is that
14 the lab number that you were associated with in terms of
15 your work on the case?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Okay. My name is Julia Seifer-Smith. Together
18 with Lamark McGreen and Margaret Russell, we are assistant
19 public defenders. We represent Mr. Whitfield in this
20 matter. Also present on the Zoom deposition is Tom
21 Koskinas from the State Attorney's office.

22 Ms. U -- oh, my goodness.

23 A Ulloa.

24 Q Was there anything that you reviewed in
25 connection with this case before being sworn in by our

1 court reporter?

2 A Yes, the report that I looked up.

3 Q I have a document that's a total of four pages.
4 The report date was April 7, 2021, and it's request number
5 one. Is that the same report that you reviewed?

6 A Yes.

7 Q Okay. Were there any other reports that you
8 know of that you wrote in connection with this case?

9 A At the bottom of this report, it says that
10 there's a related case, but I'm not sure exactly what was
11 in that case. I did ask the lab if I worked that
12 particular case and I did. So I wasn't sure if we wanted
13 to review the items in that lab number or we just wanted
14 to review these items. I don't remember what was
15 reviewed, you know, because I can't -- because I don't
16 have access to the records anymore.

17 Q Okay. We'll go over all that. I think what
18 we'll do today is we'll just deal with this one report.
19 Because my understanding -- and it sounds like this might
20 be your understanding as well -- is that this is the only
21 report that was done under lab number 21-1019. Is that
22 fair?

23 A Yes. Yes, that's fair.

24 Q So we'll get to 21-1523 which is the case that's
25 mentioned at the bottom of this report another day. How's

1 that?

2 A Okay. That's fine.

3 Q You didn't have access to that, so you're not
4 prepared to talk about that today anyway, right?

5 A Yes, that's correct.

6 Q Okay. Great. So my understanding is you are or
7 were a DNA analyst, certainly in 2021. Is that right?

8 A Yes.

9 Q Okay. Would you mind terribly sending me and/or
10 the State a copy of your CV if you have one that's
11 updated?

12 A Yes. I'm not sure when is the last time I
13 updated it, but I can send you a copy.

14 Q Okay. That would be wonderful. You don't have
15 to do it right this second but just some time soon.

16 So I just want to kind of go over generally what
17 your job was in 2021 because you signed this report as a
18 DNA analyst. So what does that mean?

19 A So as a DNA analyst, my duties involve examining
20 evidence and then performing and documenting any
21 serological testing. So that's for body fluid, which in
22 the case of the lab was blood and semen. And then as
23 well, as a DNA analyst, I would process a sample for DNA,
24 and then I would compare the results I would get from
25 the -- compare and interpret the DNA results I would get

1 from the evidence samples.

2 Q And I see a couple of letters after your name at
3 the signature line, an S-ABC. Can you tell me what that
4 means?

5 A So that is the certification for molecular
6 biology forensics. It's not a requirement to be a DNA
7 analyst, but I did take the certification exam. I believe
8 I was certified up until -- you have to meet certain
9 requirements every year, and you have to be working in the
10 field to maintain that certification. So I'm not exactly
11 sure up until that was valid, but it was valid during this
12 report.

13 Q Okay. And during this time you were an employee
14 at the Pinellas County Forensic Lab. Is that right?

15 A Yes.

16 Q When did you start with them?

17 A That was November 2015.

18 Q And when did you leave that laboratory?

19 A February 2022.

20 Q And can you tell me why you left?

21 A I had another job.

22 Q Are you still working in the field?

23 A No. I work in clinical genetics. I work for a
24 company called Myriad Genetics based out of Salt Lake
25 City.

1 Q Interesting. What do they do?

2 A They do genetic testing for things like cancer,
3 so testing if the patient has cancer or if they're at risk
4 for cancer, as well as for carrier screening for families
5 that are family planning. And that's what I do. I do --
6 I work on the carrier screening side, reading the medical
7 literature and reporting on different mutations that may
8 be related to different diseases.

9 Q So it sounds like you're using your biology
10 degree in a different way now.

11 A Yes.

12 Q Okay. So that's why you wouldn't necessarily
13 have to retain the same certifications. Is that right?

14 A Correct. Yeah, I wouldn't have needed those
15 certifications.

16 Q That sounds very interesting. So I want to talk
17 about the work that you did in this case. So I see a
18 request date of February 9th, 2021. Do you know how the
19 request came to you?

20 A So, generally, the evidence would get submitted
21 to the evidence section, and that's when the request gets
22 created by the evidence section. And then most of the
23 time the cases would be randomly assigned to different DNA
24 analysts in the unit. If there were related cases, it
25 could be that the supervisor at the time tried to have the

1 same DNA analyst perform the examination for that
2 particular request if they're related to certain things.

3 Q So that's why there's that indication at the
4 bottom that it's a different case number that you did work
5 on?

6 A Yes.

7 Q Do you know if you ever spoke with any
8 investigators in advance of doing your work on this
9 particular case, 1019?

10 A Not that I recall. It would be in the call log
11 if I did that the lab has, but not that I remember off the
12 top of my head.

13 Q And the call log is like document communications
14 between basically anybody at your laboratory and anybody
15 else regarding this particular case, this particular case
16 number. Is that right?

17 A Yes. That's where I would keep track of
18 speaking to detectives, speaking to attorneys, things like
19 that.

20 Q Okay. All right. So I guess kind of moving
21 into the work that you did, so it looks like on the
22 submission date of February 9, 2021, there were three
23 things that were submitted under this case number. Does
24 that look right to you?

25 A Yes.

1 Q Okay. It looks like you have the report in
2 front of you. Is that right?

3 A Yes.

4 Q And can you just tell me what those items are
5 and how they're numbered and why they're numbered in that
6 way?

7 A So generally at the lab, we do a simple
8 sequential one, two, three numbering. You might add some
9 if things are being taken from a particular item. And
10 then, obviously, the submitting agency will have their own
11 item numbers.

12 So how we document it is we'll say this is Lab
13 Item No. 1. Then we'll put the agency item number in
14 parentheses. Different agencies have different numbering
15 systems. And then, for example, this Item No. 1 for this
16 report was a swab of a casing. In addition to stating
17 what the item is, we'll say what packaging the item came
18 in as well.

19 Q So just speaking about Item No. 1, it's listed
20 as a swab sleeve containing two swabs from a casing. It
21 sounds like you're receiving just the swabs themselves
22 rather than the item that was swabbed. Is that fair?

23 A Yes. That's correct. In this case, the agency
24 has swabbed the item, and they just sent in the swabs.

25 Q So when you're writing swabbed from casing

1 number fourteen, that's based on information that I'm
2 assuming was on like the manila envelope indicating what's
3 inside?

4 A Yes.

5 Q And then you received a fourth item on a
6 separate day, March 2nd, 2021. Is that right?

7 A Yes.

8 Q Okay. And so it looks like you don't do any
9 work on this case until after that particular day. Is
10 that correct?

11 A That was March 2nd. Yes. Well, I don't have my
12 bench notes, but I started the DNA processing March 10th,
13 so yeah.

14 Q And did you do any, like, serological testing
15 before you did the DNA work?

16 A There wouldn't have been for this one since this
17 is what's called a touch item. So you're just expecting
18 for skin cells to be on there. There's no serological
19 test for touch DNA. So basically what we would do in the
20 lab is we take the swabs and we would what we would call
21 consume it because it's touch DNA. So you would expect
22 there to be less DNA than say a body fluid like saliva.
23 And then we put that into the tubes prepared -- the
24 labeled tubes prepared for that particular item, and that
25 goes forward with the DNA processing.

1 Q And when you say consumed, does that mean you're
2 using the entirety of the swab?

3 A Yes. You would use the whole of the tube swab,
4 yes.

5 Q I'm sorry, just before we go further into the
6 work, on the upper right-hand corner there's a case number
7 and then subject. The case number, is that from the
8 agency itself, like from the St. Petersburg Police
9 Department?

10 A Yes.

11 Q And then the subject, where does that
12 information come from?

13 A So when the agency submits the items, the sheet
14 contains a list of items. It also has subjects, meaning
15 the people connected to the case, and then at times there
16 will be a short case scenario included as well. Sometimes
17 if it's a straight-forward item, some detectives would
18 choose not to write anything there, but if it's a
19 complicated case, they might include a short summary of
20 what the case is.

21 Q And that summary isn't included in your report.
22 So that's somewhere in the file itself?

23 A Correct, yes. That would be in the submission
24 form.

25 Q So were you asked to do anything in particular

1 in terms of your work in this case, or do you just receive
2 these and you kind of know what to do?

3 A Right. Correct. So these would just be
4 processed in the standard operating procedure for these
5 particular types of samples. Yes.

6 Q So with respect to like -- well, so I guess I'm
7 going to start with three, but three and four were buccal
8 swabs. So there's going to be a presumption that you
9 would be able to develop a profile from those. Is that
10 fair?

11 A Correct. So if the items are being labeled as
12 buccal swabs by the agency or they're also called known
13 samples, we would expect since that's a swab from the
14 inside of someone's cheek, we would expect there's plenty
15 of DNA on that swab. So actually those swabs, we only
16 need a small amount of the swab to put into the sample
17 tube, and then we process that. And then, yes, we would
18 expect to develop a profile from those.

19 Q Okay. And so both three and four did result in
20 DNA profiles. Is that right?

21 A Yes.

22 Q And did you do any kind of comparison? Like,
23 were they entered into any particular database for
24 confirmation that the profiles were the people that were
25 indicated on the packaging?

1 A It depends on -- because this report doesn't
2 state victim and suspect. We don't put victims into any
3 type of database. So I'm not sure which one was which
4 here. And also, it would have stated on the reports if it
5 was -- if it had been entered into a database like CODIS.

6 Q So since there is no indication, it's kind of
7 best presumption that there was no entry into CODIS?

8 A At least not for this particular report, this
9 case, yes.

10 Q And then for Items 1 and 2, there's an
11 indication under your result box that neither resulted in
12 a DNA profile. Can you just explain a little bit about
13 what that means.

14 A Yes. So every evidence sample goes through a
15 particular process, as well as the known samples, but in
16 terms of the evidence samples, we take the cutting from
17 the buccal -- not the buccal swab, the evidence swab, and
18 then we extract the DNA, and then we quantify the DNA. At
19 that point you should be able to see how much DNA is there
20 because we're comparing it to a known amount of DNA when
21 we're trying to quantify it.

22 At that point, if you don't see anything or if
23 it's a limited sample -- it does seem like I put this all
24 through the whole process. It says that I did try to
25 amplify it, which would be the step after the

1 quantification. So at that point if I'm not sure -- if
2 I'm running it and it seems that there is no -- there is
3 no DNA, what I would do is put the maximum amount of the
4 sample to be amplified and then analyzed by the
5 instrumentation, and then from there the software results
6 would either show me DNA evidence or would be blank. So
7 that's what is shown here, that there was no data at the
8 end result.

9 Q Can you tell me why there was a different
10 process at the very beginning for one and two versus three
11 and four? Like one and two indicate PrepFiler while three
12 and four indicate Chelex.

13 A Yeah. So for evidence samples, again, you're
14 not expecting -- so the process in the lab for evidence
15 samples is to run it through using a DNA extraction kit
16 called PrepFiler. So that was used to be able to get as
17 much DNA as possible from the cells that would be on that
18 particular sample. And this is a very sensitive process
19 in that, again, we're trying to pick up pretty much like
20 every possible molecule that is in that sample of DNA;
21 whereas Chelex is kind of like -- I would call it like a
22 brute force extraction since we're expecting a lot of DNA.
23 Pretty much all you have to do is add a chemical to the
24 sample, add heat to it -- pretty much you would boil it --
25 and then you would expect that whatever DNA is coming out

1 of those cells is going to be enough to produce the
2 profile. So that's why we would have two different
3 processes for that.

4 Q Okay. And so all of that work looks like it was
5 done in March of 2021. Is that right?

6 A Yes.

7 Q Sorry, I know it's really tiny print.

8 A Yes. So it was March of 2021.

9 Q Okay. And as far as you're aware, you weren't
10 asked to do anything else with like these particular
11 items, like Items 1, 2, 3, and 4, like further analysis?

12 A Correct.

13 Q Okay. And I apologize, you did say earlier, but
14 when did you leave the Pinellas County Forensic Lab?

15 A February of 2022.

16 Q Okay. And so up until that point when you left
17 there was no additional work that you were asked to do on
18 this case, whether or not it was these particular items?

19 A Correct. Yes.

20 Q During that time between February of 2021 when
21 this initial request came in and you leaving the office in
22 February of 2022, was there any kind of change that you
23 now recall in terms of the technology that was available
24 to you that would have been available to do additional --
25 potentially additional work on these items?

1 A During that year, no. It would have been the
2 same processes.

3 Q Obviously, you can't speak to anything that
4 happened after February of 2022?

5 A Yes. Correct. So if they developed something
6 new, I don't know about it.

7 Q Okay. And you don't control like the request or
8 the submission as far as the investigation? Like, that's
9 up to the case agent back at the police department. Is
10 that right?

11 A Correct. So they -- I mean, we do have
12 submission guidelines or they did. They had submission
13 guidelines at the lab. So I think, depending on the type
14 of case, there was a limit to how many items you can
15 submit. If you wanted to submit more items -- again,
16 depending on the type of case -- the detectives would talk
17 to the DNA supervisor, and again, if that submission was
18 approved, then it would go usually to the same DNA
19 analyst.

20 Q Okay. I guess the question is, you don't really
21 have the ability to go independently into evidence and
22 property and pull things out to analyze them. That
23 request has to come from the case agent?

24 A Yes. Correct. The lab didn't have access to
25 the St. Pete evidence.

1 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Okay. I don't think I have
2 any further questions. Mr. Koskinas or Mr. McGreen,
3 Ms. Russell, any questions?

4 MR. KOSKINAS: I do not. Thank you.

5 MR. MCGREEN: No questions from me. Thank you.

6 MS. RUSSELL: Me neither. No questions.

7 Q (By Ms. Seifer-Smith) Ms. Ulloa, thank you very,
8 very much for coming today. Really appreciate it. Have
9 you understood all the questions that I've asked you?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Have you had the opportunity to answer
12 everything fully and completely?

13 A Yes.

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I'm going to suspend the
15 deposition just because I don't have the full file.
16 In case something comes up in the file, I'll reach
17 out to you to see if we need to go back on the record
18 for any further questions.

19 I don't anticipate it. I doubt that very much.
20 But I do anticipate in the future we will have to
21 speak to you regarding the other case number, which
22 is under a totally different court case number. What
23 we'll do in that event is we'll make sure you have
24 your full file available to you for that work.

25 At this point, I'll suspend the deposition. I

1 will reserve your right to read. Thank you very
2 much.

3 THE DEPONENT: Thank you.

4 (Deposition suspended at 10:58 a.m.)
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1 COUNTY OF PINELLAS)

2 STATE OF FLORIDA)

3 CERTIFICATE OF OATH

4
5 I, the undersigned authority, certify that
6 NADINE ULLOA personally appeared before me and was duly
7 sworn.

8 witness my hand and official seal this 13TH day
9 of MARCH, 2025.

10
11 Tamara M. Pacheco

12 Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR
13 COMMISSION # 474485
14 EXPIRES: March 30, 2028
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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2 STATE OF FLORIDA)

3 COUNTY OF PINELLAS)
4

5 I, Tamara M. Pacheco, certify that I was
6 authorized to and did stenographically report the
7 Deposition of NADINE ULLOA; that a review of the
8 transcript was requested; and that the transcript is a
9 true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

10 I further certify that I am not a relative,
11 employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor
12 am I a relative or employee of any of the parties'
13 attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I
14 financially interested in the action.

15 Tamara M. Pacheco16 Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR
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ERRATA SHEET

IN THE CASE OF: STATE OF FL v. CORNELIUS WHITFIELD

NAME OF DEPONENT: NADINE ULLOA

CASE NUMBER: 21-01099CFANO

Please read the transcript of your deposition.
If you feel you need to make corrections, please note on
this page. DO NOT mark on the transcript itself.
Sign and date the transcript below.

PAGE	LINE	ERROR/AMENDMENT	REASON FOR CHANGE
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Signature

Date