

Arrestee DNA Leads to Arrest of Suspect in Sierra LaMar Abduction

On May 21, 2012, Antolin Garcia-Torres was arrested for the kidnapping and murder of Sierra LaMar, a 15-year-old high school student from Morgan Hill, CA. Garcia-Torres became a suspect in the crimes when a male DNA profile from Sierra's belongings (discovered roadside following her disappearance) was matched to the DNA sample Garcia-Torres provided to California's DNA database program as an adult felony arrestee in 2010 (Video Press Conference, 5-22-12

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YoWQ21P8Xk&feature=related> [as of 7/10/12];

<http://www.ktvu.com/news/news/crime-law/sisters-sierra-lamar-murder-suspect-describe-arres/nPCxT/> [as of 7/10/12]).

Prior to this DNA match to Garcia-Torres, Santa Clara County law enforcement had no suspects in the case, and having little to go on, had contacted approximately 270 registering sex offenders in Southern Santa Clara County (Santa Clara County Sheriff Press Release, 3-20-12). But for the forensic identification DNA match of evidence from LaMar's handbag to a database sample collected from Garcia-Torres at his 2010 arrest, for a felony that was later dismissed, law enforcement had no reason to suspect Garcia-Torres of the crimes. (In 2010, Garcia-Torres had been arrested for a felony crime while he was on probation following a misdemeanor conviction; the 2010 felony was dismissed and his misdemeanor probation extended.) As of the date of the DNA sample match, Garcia-Torres had no record of felony conviction in California or any other state. The CAL-DNA Data Bank Program performed the required offender hit confirmations and released the hit notification to Santa Clara detectives through the CODIS Hit Outcome Project (CHOP) website, within 2 hours of the upload of the evidence profile by the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Crime Laboratory. This DNA database investigative lead to Garcia-Torres both enabled the Santa Clara County Sheriff to put Garcia-Torres under surveillance in the hope of finding Sierra LaMar alive and led law enforcement to additional DNA evidence in Garcia-Torres' car that connected Garcia-Torres to Sierra LaMar's disappearance before that evidence was destroyed or degraded. The presence of Sierra LaMar's profile in Garcia-Torres' vehicle helped to secure a warrant for Garcia-Torres' arrest for kidnapping and murder (Video Press Conference, 5-22-12

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YoWQ21P8Xk&feature=related> [as of 7/10/12]; http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_20684129/suspect-sierra-lamar-case-was-watched-constantly-weeks?source=most_viewed [as of 7/10/12]). The 15-year-old LaMar was last seen alive by her mother the morning of March 16, 2012 while she getting ready for school. Sierra's mother left the house for work around 6 a.m. Her school bus was to arrive at 7:24 a.m., but she never caught it. Sierra's parents contacted authorities after receiving an email from the school that Sierra was not there

[\(http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/05/missing-ca-girl-sierra-lamars-mom-sends-her-a-mothers-day-message/](http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/05/missing-ca-girl-sierra-lamars-mom-sends-her-a-mothers-day-message/) [as of 7/10/12]). Law enforcement investigators believe she was abducted after leaving her house on her way to the bus stop

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-05-22/sierra-lamar-missing-calif-teen-arrest/55131180/1> [as of 7/10/12]).

In addition, Garcia-Torres' arrest prompted a review of unsolved assaults in the area. This included a crime spree of three assaults in March 2009, investigated by Morgan Hill Police Department that occurred in the parking lot of two different Morgan Hill Safeway stores (http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_20684129/httwww.mercurynews.com/ci_12011801

[as of 7/10/12]). Forensic evidence has now linked Garcia-Torres to one of those crimes. (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-05-22/sierra-lamar-missing-calif-teen-arrest/55131180/1>).

But for the forensic identification DNA database sample collected at arrest from Garcia-Torres pursuant to California law, and barring an innocent explanation for Sierra LaMar's DNA in Garcia-Torres' car, there would be no investigative leads to Sierra LaMar's abductor while innocent persons were needlessly investigated and a violent predator remained free in the community to reoffend.