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This article was [originally written in Spanish](#), the below is its translation (11/2009/MR)

Does Justice really punish the Guilty?

By **Matthew Cally**

With the collaboration of Teresa Sicard-Archambeault



Dennis Calderón

He moved to the neighborhood looking for a better environment for his family resulting in him going to prison. The cousins Dennis Calderón and Julio Maldonado went to trial on charges of brutally attacking Christopher Saladino, who died a year later. The two cousins were convicted.

During cross examination, assistant district attorney Seth Williams asked Calderón:

Q: You think you can live where you want?

A: Yes

Q: You can go to any bar you want, true?

A: Correct

P: And you would be mad if a white boy tells you that you can not do so?

The Calderón's opted to live in the neighborhood of Oxford Circle because they believed that it was a good place to raise their children. Dennis and his cousin enjoyed that summer night, having a couple of beers as any of their neighbors. Until that night, they never knew that some of its neighbors hated them for not being white.

When they tried to go to the corner bar a group of young white people who were drinking in the street confronted them. Robert Boemer, friend of Christopher Saladino, testified that he and five other youths were talking, when one of them said "If I see that nigger, will kick the shit out of him" at that moment Dennis and Julio were passing by. One of the youths had an exchange of words with Dennis, and then the group began to attack them, with anger accompanied by racial insults, from bottles of beer, punches and according to the two Latinos, even knives.

We asked Assistant District Attorney Mitch Bober, why wasn't there ever an investigation done on the attack against the two cousins. He replied that the case was not about the attack against them, but about "*two parents who have a son in the cemetery*".

The District Attorney's office never accepted the racial aspect of the incident. Bober who led the preliminary hearing said "*They were not clear what the accused said in reference*

to the racial epithets or the rest". Nevertheless Bober acknowledged, that on that night Saladino was within the group of youths in the street, but either way, he assured it was clear Saladino wasn't an attacker and therefore self-defense against him was not valid.

Boemer also testified that Saladino went to see the three or four white youth who knocked Dennis to the ground and beating him. According to trial transcripts, Saladino, had been arrested at the beginning of the summer for assaulting a police officer and two years earlier for beating a neighborhood youth.

The judge found it to be an ugly racial incident here Dennis and Julio had been attacked by a group of white racists, but also found Saladino was not involved in the group of attackers. The judge found Saladino as an innocent bystander or someone who was trying to pacify the fight.

Steve Marino, Attorney for Dennis told Al Dia that seemed absurd. "*Julio hit the person causing a major threat to his cousin*" said Marino. He also said that the atmosphere in court was extremely tense and that after the trial he learned that there were threats against him. But said that he was not aware of the threats previously made to the Calderón family and neighbors.

In a trial without a jury, the two cousins were found guilty of aggravated assault and sentenced to prison. After two years and a half in prison they were released on parole.

Saladino later died, the two cousins were again arrested and charged with murder. They were exonerated of all charges by a jury. Both are waiting for the response to the appeal to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Dennis has parole and is expecting a new trial. Julio has been in prison for three weeks since his lawyer did not appeal in time.