

Background and Chronology of the Murder and the Trial

On Sunday, September 26, 1999, in Ridgefield, New Jersey, Gladys Ricart, a young Dominican woman, was preparing for what should have been the happiest day of her life, her wedding day. But as she stood in her wedding gown posing for photos surrounded by family and friends, Agustin Garcia, her abusive ex-boyfriend, burst into the house and fatally shot her.

The killing and subsequent irresponsible media coverage served to divide not only the largely Dominican neighborhood of Washington Heights, in New York City, where both Ricart and Garcia had lived for several years, but Latinos everywhere who heard about the murder.

I was very upset about people's ignorance about the victim. We need to scream at the top of our lungs that we are here, that we have laws, legislation and programs to help women. They just don't know that help is there for them.

Josie Ashton, September 21, 2006

Because of Garcia's prominence as a businessman and well-connected community leader, media reports tended to blame the victim by suggesting that she may have invited her own death by daring to marry another man, causing Garcia to become filled with jealousy. "The sensational case illustrated how little people know about domestic violence, how women are still blamed for allegedly inviting violence, and how the nation of crime of passion as a defense, which should have been discarded long ago but is being used." www.womensenews.org, Crime of Passion Defense Should Not be Permitted, November 14, 2001)

The judge in the case had allowed Garcia's attorneys to use a "crime of passion defense," but on October 29, a jury rejected this defense when it convicted Agustin Garcia of the murder of Ricart. (*Rejected this ploy on the part of this defense*)

In the wake of the trial, members of the Latino community, domestic violence advocates, and other outraged individuals formed a grass roots coalition – The Committee for Justice Gladys Ricart. The committee sought justice for Gladys' murder, offered support to her family and helped to raise awareness about the issue of domestic violence and its consequences.

About a month after the Brides March, on October 29, 2001, the jury in the murder trial of Agustin Garcia rendered a guilty verdict. He was sentenced to life in prison.

After the trial and sentencing, the Committee for Justice for Gladys Ricart evolved into the New York Latinas Against Domestic Violence. (NYLADV), an organization dedicated to creating greater awareness and consciousness about domestic violence and its tragic consequences. It was also to ensure that the memory of Gladys Ricart and all of the women who have died or been injured at the hands of their abusers, live on. One way of doing this is to organize annual Bride's Marches in order to take the issue to Latino neighborhoods and attract media coverage.

To date (Spring 2010), six Marches have been held in New York City bringing together hundreds of women, men, and youth, among them members of the Ricart family and other families affected by domestic violence. Included in this group are elected officials, civic leaders, clergy, students, and scores of domestic violence advocates.

It's Alianza's hope that DV organizations and other anti-violence advocates around the country will consider organizing a Brides March in their respective cities and towns.