

15-Year-Old Suspect's Alibi Checks Out; DA Drops Murder Charge

By Dave Racher

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Whenever 15-year-old Luis Fuentes discussed his pending murder trial with his lawyer, he would break down in tears. "I didn't do it," insisted Fuentes, of Willard Street near A, during talks with attorney A. Charles Peruto Jr. "I was home." Yesterday, Assistant District Attorney Charles Ehrlich withdrew murder and weapons charges against Fuentes, clearing him of killing Angel "Papo" Montanez, 35, on Dec. 2, 1989, near 7th Street and Indiana Avenue.

Montanez, of Erie Avenue near 27th Street, was shot five times in a drug related incident, police said. Erlich told Common Pleas Judge Theodore A. McKee that as a result of "new information" in the case, he could not, in good conscience, prosecute Fuentes. The judge praised the DA's ethics.

After the dismissal, Fuentes, a student at Thomas Edison High School, hugged Peruto, and was then promised a summer job at the attorney's office. "He told me he wants to be a lawyer," Peruto said. Peruto said he turned over the name of a new suspect to the prosecutor on Tuesday, just before jury selection was about to begin at Fuentes' murder trial.

Ehrlich asked for time to investigate, and on Wednesday and Thursday corroborated the information. He also checked out Fuentes' alibi.