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First Testimony in Rosendo Rodriguez Capital Murder Trial

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The capital murder trial of a Lubbock man is now underway in a court near Amarillo. Rosendo Rodriguez has pleaded not guilty to the murders of Summer Baldwin and her unborn child. Her body was found in a suitcase at the Lubbock landfill in 2005.

Rodriguez entered the courtroom Monday morning wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and white tie.

The twelve jurors and two alternates include nine women, one of them is Hispanic; and five men, one of them black.

Prosecutors began opening arguments around 9:30 a.m., saying Rodriguez treated Baldwin and her unnamed child as pieces of garbage, not human beings. They acknowledged that Baldwin was a prostitute, saying she was not a perfect person, but a perfect victim for Rodriguez.

Trey Payne, Lubbock County Assistant Criminal District Attorney, said "There is a lot of evil in the world. Some are right in your face; some are hidden, calm, cool and collected like Rosendo Rodriguez."

Rodriguez, a Marine Reservist, was on leave for the weekend. He and other members of his unit came to Lubbock for the weekend, but only Rodriguez checked into the Holiday Inn Civic Center, Room 609.

He told people he'd served in Iraq, and aided in Hurricane Katrina relief. The prosecution said he lied about both, to impress others.

Baldwin's body suffered at least 70 injuries throughout her body. Rodriguez's DNA was found inside. Her blood was found in the hotel room.

Prosecutors also said following the murder, Rodriguez tossed Baldwin's possessions in various dumpsters to spread out the evidence. And Wal-Mart surveillance video shows Rodriguez then used his debit card to purchase the suitcase used to dispose of Baldwin's body. Evidence indicates he then went to rent a movie, and purchase two #1 combo meals from Chick-Fil-A.

The defense countered, saying there was no way Rodriguez could have known Baldwin was pregnant, and that she probably did not care about the 5 gram fetus

herself or she would not have participated in such a lifestyle that also included drugs.

They also listed the witnesses in this case, including Baldwin's clients, friends, drug suppliers, and fellow prostitutes. They said it was difficult to compile an accurate timeline of the events, because many of the witnesses were under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Rodriguez's attorneys reminded the jury that if any of the evidence led to reasonable doubt, they must disregard it and make their decision based on fact, not emotion.

Several witnesses took the stand on this first day of testimony, including Summer Baldwin's mother; a Lubbock Police Detective who photographed the crime scene; and Ryan Chapa, a supervisor at the Lubbock landfill. Chapa was on duty when Baldwin's body was found. He testified that to this day, he cannot use a suitcase.

Rodriguez also reportedly confessed to killing Lubbock teen, Joanna Rogers. Her family is in court, as well as the families of both Rodriguez and Baldwin.

This trial was moved to Randall County, after it was decided that he could not get a fair trial due to the extensive media coverage in Lubbock.