

Man who killed Gainesville travel agent has death sentence upheld

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The Florida Supreme Court upheld a death sentence Thursday for a man convicted of killing his cellmate at a Union County prison days after he was sentenced to life in prison for the 1999 fatal beating and stabbing of a Gainesville travel agent.



Richard Gill, 40, had appealed his conviction and death sentence for the 2001 murder of Orlando Rosello. Gill and Rosello had shared a cell at the Reception and Medical Center in Union County, where Gill was sent after getting the life sentence for slaying Gainesville resident Beverly Moore.

After entering a guilty plea to Moore's death, Gill told Circuit Judge Stan Morris he would rather be put to death for a crime he didn't commit than spend life in prison and, if he didn't receive a death sentence, another judge would have to impose it.

Morris notified prison officials of the threat. Four days after his sentencing in Moore's death, Rosello was found strangled to death with a strip of bedsheet around his neck, court record stated.

Rosello had been serving a 20-month prison sentence for car theft and had been sent to the center for medical care.

One issue raised on appeal was Gill's alleged mental illness and brain abnormality.

Morris, in sentencing Gill in the Moore case, had noted Gill's mental health history.

But the appellate court stated in its order upholding Gill's death sentence, "The existence of mental illness or mental mitigation does not automatically disqualify a defendant from receiving the death penalty."

The court also found that Rosello's murder was committed in a manner that didn't involve frenzy, panic or rage.

"Gill admits to coldly strangling Rosello while he slept," the order stated.

Gill currently is being held at Florida State Prison in Bradford County, according to records from the Florida Department of Corrections.