

He tells of jailing on a false charge

BY WILLIAM MURPHY

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A man accused of an armed robbery that happened while he was in jail on another charge testified yesterday that he couldn't sleep at night, was threatened by older prisoners, and at times cried himself to sleep during the four months in jail he was falsely imprisoned.

He sometimes heard moaning from other cells during the night, he said. "I didn't know what was going on in there. I'm just glad it wasn't me," Raheem Crews told the jury in U.S. District Court in Central Islip.

Crews, who was 19 at the time, testified in his false arrest lawsuit seeking damages from Nassau County and its police.

On Tuesday, retired Nassau County Det. Nicholas Leema testified he found out that Crews could not have committed the crime because he had viewed a computer record on June 1, 2005, showing Crews was in the Nassau County jail in East Meadow at the time of the robbery on March 26, 2005. Crews, of Roosevelt, was arrested May 27, 2005, by other detectives from Leema's squad.

"The caseload I had, it just slipped my mind. These things do happen, and I'm sorry this happened," Leema said Tuesday. He said he might have remembered if he had printed out the computer record, or attached "a sticky note" to the file. But he failed to take either step, he testified.

A lawyer for the county, Matthew Cuomo of Manhattan, and a lawyer for Leema, Mitchell Garber of Manhattan, suggested during cross examination that Crews gave an account of his arrest and jail stay during the trial that was inconsistent with his testimony in pretrial depositions years ago.

Lawyers in the case were scheduled to make their closing arguments to the jury today. The jury then begins deliberations.

Crews, now 29, said he was elated while in jail in August of 2005 when he found out that his mother and his fiancée could provide him with an alibi on the date he was accused of the street robbery of a 14-year-old — April 26, 2005.



JAMES CARBONE

Retired Det. Nicholas Leema



JAMES CARBONE

Raheem Crews

Then he got the bad news: His arrest paperwork was wrong and the robbery was actually on March 26, 2005. "I was devastated," he said.

Then came more good news: Records showed he was in the middle of a weeklong stay at Nassau County jail on March 26, 2005, for failing to report to his probation officer on an earlier case.

But it took his attorney at the time until Sept. 28, 2005, to get a certified copy of the jail

records, according to the court file. He was released the following day after spending 125 days behind bars, the records show, and the charges were dismissed on Oct. 17.

Crews is alleging false arrest, malicious prosecution and other improprieties. His original lawsuit asked for \$10 million in damages.

Leema testified that he was forced to retire or face departmental charges for his handling of the arrest.