

Death Row inmate gets new trial

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A Death Row inmate returned Tuesday to Broward Circuit Court after the Florida Supreme Court ordered a new trial amid allegations that his judge and prosecutor had dined together while he was on trial and had joked about the case.

Omar Loureiro, 46, received a death sentence in 2007 for nearly decapitating a Lighthouse Point man he had accompanied home from a bar.

Broward prosecutor and Sunrise City Commissioner Sheila Alu said she dined with Circuit Judge Ana Gardiner and prosecutor Howard Scheinberg four days before Loureiro's first-degree murder conviction and heard them discuss the case.

In sworn depositions, Gardiner and Scheinberg said they only happened to bump into each other at an upscale Las Olas eatery. They conceded there was an "appearance of impropriety," but denied speaking about the case. They did, however, acknowledge having cellphone conversations in the months after the March 2007 dinner and Loureiro's sentencing that August.

Circuit Judge Martin Bidwill on Tuesday appointed Loureiro's former defense attorney, Michael Tenzer, to represent Loureiro in the new trial, which has not been scheduled.