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JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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48-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE IN 1981 COLD CASE

A man who pleaded guilty earlier in connection with a sexual assault and murder that occurred in Denver in 1981 has been sentenced to prison. The successful conclusion of the case is the direct result of work by the Denver Police Department's cold case detectives and crime lab personnel as well as the Denver District Attorney's Office.

Hector Bencomo-Hinojos (dob: 10-15-1959) pleaded guilty in April to second-degree murder (F2) and second-degree kidnapping (F2) in the death of 32-year Patricia Beard. He was sentenced to 48 years in the Colorado Department of Corrections.

In 1981, Beard lived in a one-room apartment in the 500 block of East 11th Avenue. She had not been seen for several days. A family member who went to check on her found her body in her room on March 27, 1981. The case was unsolved until a DNA match identified Bencomo-Hinojos as a suspect. At the time, he was in federal custody in Pennsylvania. He was extradited to Colorado and charged in 2013; his case was the 100th DNA cold case filed in Denver. It was noted at the time that the groundbreaking collaboration between the National Institute of Justice and the City of Denver has brought more rapists and murderers to justice than any other place in the world.

The victim was well-loved and supported by an extended family, who was present at the sentencing hearing yesterday in Denver District Court. Both her son and the assigned cold case detective spoke to the court. The case was prosecuted by Chief Deputy DA Dawn Weber.

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The Cold Case DNA Project is an ongoing collaborative effort involving Denver Police detectives, the Denver Police Department Crime Lab and the Denver District Attorney's Office with grant funding through the National Institute of Justice.