

# Santa Cruz Sentinel

## Santa Cruz woman who cried rape pleads guilty to filing false police report

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SANTA CRUZ – A woman who last summer told police she'd been kidnapped, robbed and raped while shopping at the Ross store on River Street pleaded guilty Thursday to a misdemeanor charge of falsely reporting a criminal offense and will repay Santa Cruz police for the cost of the investigation, the District Attorney's Office reported.

Salustia Ogarrio-Munoz, 36, of Santa Cruz will also perform 100 hours of community service, but will not serve any jail time, Judge Ariadne Symons ruled.

Filing charges against someone for making up a crime is rare, prosecutor Trevor Barna said. In this instance, the DA's Office chose to prosecute Ogarrio-Munoz to prevent future abuse and to protect the integrity of the procedures put in place to combat actual sex crimes.

Barna said phony rape reports are a serious issue.

"It can have a chilling effect on victims who are concerned they may not be taken seriously by law enforcement," he said.

Ogarrio-Munoz called police in June and told a harrowing tale. She said she had been taken from the store at gunpoint, forced into her car and driven around the county for hours before she was locked in a room in a house and raped. The men also robbed her before dropping her off the next day near the intersection of highways 1 and 9, not far from where she said the kidnapping started.

The report prompted a huge police response and an immense amount of public concern. However, investigators found many holes in Ogarrio-Munoz's story and eventually she recanted.

In reality, she had been duped by two men, who sold her a painted metal bar that she believed was solid gold. There was no kidnapping or rape.

"Ms. Ogarrio-Munoz did more than attempt to use law enforcement for her own vengeful purposes," Barna said. "She also damaged the credibility of a system designed to investigate violent sexual assault and to protect rape victims."

No one was ever prosecuted for scamming Ogarrio-Munoz.

Ogarrio-Munoz was ordered to pay Santa Cruz Police more than \$3,000 in restitution, which covers 25 hours of officer time and some of the investigation techniques used in the case, including the sexual assault examination. Barna said she has paid about \$800 of that debt.

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