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Entertainment

Cosby case woman free on bail



Retrial set to open old wounds for US TV star Bill Cosby

The woman jailed for trying to extort £25m from entertainer Bill Cosby has been freed from a California prison, a day after her conviction was overturned.

Autumn Jackson was driven away from a minimum-security women's prison near Oakland by her mother, Shaun Upshaw, who had an affair with Cosby in the 1970s.

Jackson, who threatened to tell US tabloids that she was Cosby's illegitimate daughter, was sentenced in 1997 to two years in prison.

The 24-year-old was convicted of extortion, conspiracy and crossing state lines to commit a crime.

But a Second Circuit Court of Appeals has dismissed the convictions of Jackson and two associates, Boris Sabas and Jose Medina, on grounds that the trial judge misinstructed the jury.



Autumn Jackson: Conviction overturned

The appeals court remanded the case for retrial and said the three defendants could be retried together.

However, the court said the evidence at the original trial was "plainly sufficient to support verdicts of guilty had the jury been properly instructed".

The case received widespread attention after Jackson and Medina were arrested two days after Cosby's son was murdered in Los Angeles.

Ennis Cosby, a 27-year-old Columbia University student, was killed on 16 January, 1997 as he changed a car tyre in the Bel Air district.

Federal prosecutors found no evidence that the extortion scheme was connected to the murder.



Cosby's murdered son, Ennis

In July 1998, Mikhail Markhasev - a teenage Ukrainian immigrant - was convicted of the murder and also found guilty of attempted robbery while high on drugs.

Cosby, 61, is one of America's highest paid stars.

Starting off as a stand-up comedian, he starred in TV classic I Spy in the '60s, before becoming the nation's favourite dad in his own long-

running sitcom, The Cosby Show.

Cosby, who has financially contributed to Jackson's education, testified at the extortion trial that he had a brief affair with Jackson's mother, but denied being her father.

Prosecutors have not yet decided to appeal against the verdict, or ask for a retrial.
