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Now, should Brown's reward be paid?

Opinions split on if women deserve \$140,000 for late tips

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The killers of seven people at the Palatine Brown's Chicken have had a bounty of more than \$100,000 on their heads since the vicious slayings in 1993.

Yet with Thursday's conviction of Juan Luna, it remains uncertain whether any of three women who helped crack the case - one of whom admits she kept quiet to protect the defendants - will see a dime of that purse.

The Palatine officials who set up the fund as authorities scoured the country for suspects say they haven't considered whether the women should get the money.

"People donated the money with the perception it would be paid to someone to come forward," said Palatine Councilman Jack Wagner, who spearheaded the collection. "I would imagine we have an obligation to look real carefully at the person or persons who were responsible for this."

Some donors have strong opinions that waiting nearly a decade to come forward should vacate any claim to the cash. The owner of the Brown's Chicken & Pasta chain, who has pledged \$25,000 to the reward fund, holds that view.

"Do I think they deserve it? Hell, no," Frank Portillo scoffed.

Juan Luna

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Portillo had a separate reward fund of about \$110,000 he collected through his stores and other donors, but he divided the money among the victims' families years ago when he thought the killers never would be found.



Ehlenfeldt's daughter's statement

Village of Palatine statement

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Luna was convicted Thursday after a 14-day trial and nearly 12 hours of jury deliberations. The jury will hear arguments next week on whether he should be executed for shooting to death the two owners of the Palatine restaurant and their five employees Jan. 8, 1993.

The man accused of being his accomplice, Jim Degorski, is being tried separately and also could face the death penalty if convicted. Degorski has pleaded not guilty.

On Friday, Wagner said a decision on the Palatine reward money likely won't come until