



Genesee County Prosecutor's Office

David Leyton, Prosecutor



Genesee County jury convicts man of second-degree murder in woman's shooting death

by Paul Janczewski | The Flint Journal
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FLINT, MICHIGAN -- Antwain D. Williams told jurors he did not know his partner had a gun or was going to try to kill a man over a family problem.

And Williams said the bullets fired by co-defendant Devonte K. Thomas instead killed Latesha D. Taylor, a passenger in the intended victim's vehicle.

Jurors didn't believe Williams and took only hours Friday to convict him of second-degree murder and carrying a concealed weapon in the July 15, 2006 slaying of Taylor.

Jurors acquitted Williams, 22, of Flint, of assault with intent to murder Earthly C. Knight, and felony firearms use.

Genesee Circuit Judge Joseph J. Farah scheduled an April 8 sentencing for Williams.

Thomas, 17, of Flint, faces a March 26 sentencing before Farah after earlier pleading guilty to second-degree murder and felony firearms use in the slaying.

He also testified against Williams at the trial.

In closing arguments, assistant Genesee County Prosecutor Karen Hanson told jurors Williams was just as guilty as Thomas because he drove the vehicle that blocked Knight's vehicle from getting away.

Taylor, 18, was sitting in the passenger side of a car about 12:30 a.m. with Knight, her boyfriend, when witnesses said a vehicle drove up to the drive-through store at Welch Boulevard and Chevrolet Avenue, blocked them in and unleashed a hail of bullets.

Police said they later found Taylor at Hurley Medical Center. She died from a gunshot wound to her head.

Thomas said he was driving around with Williams and Thomas' cousin, Victor Cordell, when Williams spotted Knight.

He said Knight allegedly stole money from Williams' family, and Williams wanted to avenge that.

Thomas said they chased the Knight vehicle for a while and then lost it but spotted it at the drive-through store.

Thomas said Williams gave him a weapon and ordered him to shoot Knight as he blocked the vehicle in.

Thomas said he did not want to shoot but did because he feared Williams would retaliate against him or his family if he refused.

Witnesses said Williams later made a telephone call, bragging that they had gotten Knight.

Attorney Kraig S. Sippell, who represents Williams, told jurors they could not believe either Thomas or Cordell.

He said Thomas was "a desperate kid trying to help himself," and that Cordell lied to help his cousin.

Thomas was 15 at the time of the slaying but was charged as an adult.

Flint Police Sgt. Mike Angus took statements from both Thomas and Williams.

Williams allegedly told Angus that Knight had broken into a family member's residence and stole items. He also admitted following Knight to the store and blocking his vehicle.

But he denied providing a gun to Thomas.

Thomas and Williams are being held without bond in the Genesee County Jail.

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