



Genesee County Prosecutor's Office David Leyton, Prosecutor



One man pleads guilty, agrees to testify against co-defendant in 2007 slayings

by Paul Janczewski | The Flint Journal
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GENESEE COUNTY, Michigan -- The guilty pleas by one of two men charged with killing two cousins near Baker College in 2007 brought some relief to one of the victim's mother.

"It's a relief to know it's half-way over," said Jodee L. Settle, 39, of Burt.

Her comments came after Mario O. Gray II, 19, of Detroit, on Wednesday pleaded guilty to two counts of second-degree murder, and one count each of armed robbery and felony firearms use.

Gray and Janard D. Hackworth, 19, of Detroit, former Baker College students, face murder, armed robbery and weapons charges in the March 12, 2007 slaying of Justin T. Petty, 20, of Flint Township and his cousin, Daniel R. Tyson, 17, of Burt in Saginaw County.

Settle, Tyson's mother, said she was glad that Gray came forward and admitted his role in the slayings, and said she hopes Hackworth does too.

Officials said the slayings occurred over a theft of marijuana and cash from the cousins. Settle, whose son was a student at Baker College and knew both defendants, said she believes he was "heavily influenced" by Gray and Hackworth.

"My son was not a drug dealer," she said.

On Wednesday, Gray told Genesee Circuit Judge Archie L. Hayman he and Hackworth planned to rob the two of drugs and money.

Hayman scheduled a May 22 sentencing for Gray.

Prosecutors amended two first-degree murder charges to second-degree for Gray in exchange for his plea to the lesser murder charge. And he is required to testify against Hackworth, who is scheduled for trial May 13 before Hayman.

Gray, who was represented by attorney Philip H. Beauvais III, said he and Hackworth were students at Baker and knew Tyson, also a student there, but not Petty, who did not attend the college.

Tyson had earlier lived in the dorms with Hackworth and Gray but was not living there at the time of his slaying, although he remained a student.

Gray said he and Hackworth met up with Tyson and Petty about 8:30 p.m. to purchase marijuana, possibly in exchange for a weapon. After the pair got in the backseat of a vehicle driven by Petty, Gray said Hackworth shot both in the head, went through one's pockets looking for money and snatched a bag of marijuana.

He said both returned to Baker College and later traveled to Detroit with Lawon Carter of Detroit, a friend of the suspects, to sell the marijuana.

Gray said he got \$200 from the sale of the stolen pot.

The bodies of Petty and Tyson were found about 9 p.m. with gunshot head wounds in a car at W. Scottwood Avenue and Otto Street near Bristol Road in Flint Township.

Carter, who is charged as an accessory after the fact to a felony, also is expected to testify against Hackworth at trial before his own case moves forward.