

NEWS RELEASE

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Four homicide convictions obtained, or upheld on appeal, in four days

On April 16, 2010, after a two-week trial in Mecklenburg County Superior Court, a jury convicted Eric Morales of first-degree murder for the September 14, 2007, murder of his girlfriend, Atoi Watson. For this domestic homicide, Morales was sentenced to *life in prison without the possibility of parole*. He was the fourth defendant in the last year convicted in a domestic homicide and the third to receive a sentence of life without parole.

On April 19, 2010, after a four-week trial in Mecklenburg County Superior Court, a jury convicted Anthony Marcus of the first degree murder of Olivia Sigmon. Marcus was also convicted of numerous other felonies associated with this crime. Ms. Sigmon had stopped her car to help with an auto accident when Marcus got out of the stolen car he had wrecked and attempted to carjack Olivia Sigmon. He did this in front of her boyfriend, her young daughter, and another child. Marcus was sentenced to *life in prison without the possibility of parole* plus an additional 43 years in prison.

These two convictions of first degree murder are the fourteenth and fifteenth defendants convicted of murder by Mecklenburg County juries in the last 20 months. In that same time period, thirteen defendants have received life sentences and one was sentenced to death. Also in that time period, forty-five additional defendants entered pleas of guilty in murder cases.

On April 20, 2010, the North Carolina Court of Appeals *upheld* the December 2008 convictions of Mervin Armstrong. Armstrong was convicted at a jury trial of second-degree vehicular murder, driving while impaired, and driving while licensed revoked for the 2007 traffic wreck that killed Terrence Pretty, the passenger in his car. He was sentenced to 189 to 236 months in prison for the murder, followed by 6 months for the driving while impaired.

The North Carolina Court of Appeals also *upheld* the March 10, 2009, conviction of Markese Rice. Rice was convicted of first degree murder in the killing of his ex-girlfriend's new boyfriend. Rice also received a sentence of life in prison without parole.

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