

NEWS RELEASE

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Jury verdicts in murder trial send 2 men to prison for life

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Two men were sentenced today to spend the rest of their lives in prison after a jury found them guilty of the 2015 murder of 34-year-old Norris Martin, whose body was found in a burned car in Gaston County. The trial of Marquez Breon Springs-Owens and James Hampton Evans began on February 10, 2020, after prosecutors sought to join the defendants for trial. The Honorable R. Gregory Horne, Superior Court Judge, presided over the trial.

The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Homicide Team tried both Springs-Owens, 33, and Evans, 32, for 1) first-degree murder, 2) robbery with a dangerous weapon, 3) conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon, 4) first-degree kidnapping and 5) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The jury found both defendants *guilty* as charged.

Judge Horne sentenced Springs-Owen to *life in prison without the possibility of parole*, as well as an additional 129-176 months in prison. Judge Horne sentenced Evans to *life in prison without the possibility of parole*, as well as an additional 113-158 months in prison.

Two codefendants in this case, Germonta Wallace and Jay Phifer, are now deceased.

On December 30, 2015, Mr. Martin was riding with a friend who met a group of four men to conduct a drug transaction. But the four men – Springs-Owens, Evans, Wallace and Phifer – had planned to rob Mr. Martin's friend during the transaction. Wallace and Phifer got into the victims' vehicle. It was then that Wallace pulled out a gun and fatally shot Mr. Martin in the back of the neck.

Wallace turned the gun on Mr. Martin's friend and forced him out of the car. Evans and Phifer tied him up while Springs-Owens pointed a gun at him. Evans, who also pointed a gun, and Phifer took this victim to his home, which Phifer ransacked as he searched for cash. Eventually, Evans and Phifer drove him to Woodland Circle in Charlotte, where Phifer shot him multiple times. Then, they left him for dead. This victim was able to crawl to a nearby home for help, and the resident called 911. He survived.

The suspects drove the car containing Mr. Norris' body to Gaston County. The vehicle was set on fire in a school parking lot. Responding to reports of a fire, police found the burning vehicle and arrested Evans as he attempted to flee from the area.

Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit www.charmeckda.com. For updates and other information, "like" the DA's Office on Facebook at www.facebook.com/charmeckda and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA.

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