

District Attorney's  
Office  
State of North Carolina  
26th Prosecutorial District  
Mecklenburg County

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# NEWS RELEASE

Spencer B. Merriweather  
III  
District Attorney

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## Jury convicts man of first-degree murder

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Kelton Silver was sentenced to life in prison yesterday after a jury convicted him for the 2018 murder of 28-year-old Zonta Dunlap. The trial, which began September 23, 2024, and concluded with yesterday's verdict, was held in courtroom 5370 before the Honorable Jacqueline Grant, Superior Court Judge.

The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Homicide Team tried Kelton Silver, 29, for 1) first-degree murder and 2) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The jury found him *guilty as charged*. Judge Grant sentenced Silver to life in prison without the possibility of parole for the first-degree murder charge and 18-31 months in prison for the possession of a firearm by a convicted felon charge. That sentence will run concurrently with the life sentence.

On the morning of December 26, 2018, Kelton Silver and his co-defendant, Ivan Petty, were meeting with Zonta Dunlap's cousin in the garage of the cousin's Huntersville residence. The cousin went inside the home briefly, where Dunlap and his twin brother were hanging out upstairs. When the cousin returned to the garage a short time later, Petty put a gun to his neck and threatened to rob him. Silver was near the front of the car also armed with a gun. The victim's cousin fought Petty in an attempt to get away and, during the struggle, Petty fired two shots, one of which struck the victim's cousin. After he was shot, he ran through the home pursued by the defendant and Petty. At that time, Zonta Dunlap and his twin brother were looking down the staircase to see what was happening. Both Silver and Petty fired shots up the stairs striking Dunlap. After a brief struggle with Petty on the front lawn, the cousin ran to try to get help. Zonta Dunlap had been shot multiple times and tried to flee the home but collapsed on the lawn where he passed away.

Detectives with the Huntersville Police Department learned that Petty was wearing an electronic monitor at the time of the murder, and his monitor showed he was at the scene at the time the murder took place. Home surveillance video from outside the front door also showed Silver and Petty at the scene.

Prior to the start of the trial, Ivan Petty pled guilty to 1) second-degree murder, 2) robbery with a dangerous weapon, 3) assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury, 4) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and 5) conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon. Judge Grant sentenced him to 360-444 months in prison.

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