



AG Announces that Court of Criminal Appeals Upholds Jefferson County Murder Conviction

(MONTGOMERY) –Attorney General Luther Strange announced that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals on Friday upheld the murder conviction of Jerry Collins Jr. Collins, 32, of Birmingham, was convicted in the Jefferson County Circuit Court in September of 2013 for the murder of Joe Smith.

Evidence presented at trial stated that on April 11, 2011, a witness who was watching television looked out of her window when her dogs began barking and saw a white Chevrolet Trailblazer SUV in the street near her house. She saw the Trailblazer reverse, go forward, and then reverse again watching as Collins ran over Smith's body around three times with the Trailblazer. When Birmingham Police officers went to the scene of the crime, they observed Smith lying face down in the alley. Smith was pronounced dead at the scene.

Lemar Shorts, an officer in the traffic homicide unit of the Birmingham Police Department, investigated the crime scene and testified that he found car parts and tire marks at the scene. The tire marks led all the way up to Smith's body in the alleyway and continued past his body; several of these tire marks indicated that the vehicle was accelerating rapidly. Other tire marks a few feet from Smith's body indicated that the vehicle turned at a relatively high rate of speed. Shorts testified that the evidence at the scene was not consistent with an accident.

Further, a forensic pathologist with the Jefferson County Coroner Medical Examiner's Office who performed the autopsy on Smith testified that Smith was stabbed 10 times and that one of these stab wounds caused lethal injuries. Blood stains on the dashboard and headset of the Trailblazer were found to match Smith's DNA profile.

The case was prosecuted at trial by Jefferson County District Attorney Brandon Falls' office. Collins was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole and subsequently sought to have his conviction reversed on appeal.

The Attorney General's Appeals Division handled the case during the appeals process, arguing for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals to affirm the conviction. The Court did so in a decision issued on Friday, July 11.

Attorney General Strange commended Assistant Attorney General James Prude of the Attorney General's Appeals Division for his successful work in this case.

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