



AG Announces That Court of Criminal Appeals Upholds Shelby County Murder Conviction

(MONTGOMERY)—Attorney General Luther Strange announced that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals on Friday upheld the murder conviction of James Darrell Johnson. Johnson, 60, of Montgomery, was convicted in the Shelby County Circuit Court in March of 2013 for the murder of Mike Vaughn.

Evidence presented at trial stated that in July 2008, Johnson was employed as a heavy machinery operator by a construction company. On July 28, 2008, Johnson quit his job. Johnson arrived at the project site the next morning irate and claimed that Vaughn, his foreman, owed him money for per diem. When Vaughn arrived at the project site, Johnson approached him and demanded the money he believed Vaughn owed to him. Vaughn, who at that time was engaged with clients, was dismissive of Johnson and his demands. Johnson grabbed Vaughn, lifted him above his head, and slammed him to the ground. Johnson repeated the maneuver multiple times before tossing Vaughn aside. Johnson told Vaughn that he told him not to mess with him and that he was going to get him. James Massengil, the owner of the construction company, took Vaughn to the Brookwood Hospital emergency room. The attack resulted in at least 17 fractures of Vaughn's ribs, which eventually lead to the collapse of both of his lungs, an infection, and ultimately his death. Vaughn died in the hospital over a month later.

The case was prosecuted at trial by Shelby County District Attorney Robert Owens' office. Johnson was sentenced to 45 years in prison 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, August 22.

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

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