



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February 15, 2010

SOUTHSIDE STRANGLER SENTENCED TO LIFE FOR RAPE AND MURDER

State vs. Willie Bryant

Atlanta- Fulton County District Attorney Paul L. Howard, Jr. announces that the offender responsible for many sleepless nights in the peaceful Marvin Lane community located in Southwest Atlanta has been convicted by a Fulton County jury.

Willie Lee Bryant, 37, was convicted today of Murder, Felony Murder, Rape, Aggravated Assault and Burglary and was immediately sentenced to life plus 20 years for the November 25, 2005 murder of 53-year old Candia Person. Ms. Person was either strangled or suffocated in her Marvin Lane home after she was raped and robbed by Bryant. The defendant stole credit cards which he used to purchase gas at service stations along the Fulton Industrial Boulevard corridor. Police responding to the scene determined there was forced entry after discovering a broken window and cut telephone wires. Defendant Bryant had recently dated the victim's daughter. Police zeroed in on him as a suspect after learning of a previous rape arrest involving a former girlfriend. When confronted with DNA evidence linking him to the crime, Bryant claimed to have had a sexual relationship with the victim but denied killing her.

The crime sent shockwaves through the quiet Atlanta community and left neighbors in fear of their own safety prior to a suspect being identified. District Attorney Howard hopes today's verdict provides some measure of solace for Ms. Person's loved ones saying, "No family or community should endure such pain. This defendant murdered a woman in her own home, minding her own business and in doing so robbed our community of someone special. We are pleased with the jury's verdict and relieved that after five years of anxious anticipation, the justice system has finally spoken."

Superior Court Judge Kimberly Esmond Adams presided over the case. It was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Tanya Miller with assistance from North Fulton Community Prosecutor Todd Ashley and DA Investigator Steve DiMasi. Detective A. Gentile of the Atlanta Police Department led the initial investigation.

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