

Statesman

Man guilty of killing ex-girlfriend, gets life

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Posted Sep 20, 2013 at 12:01 AM

Updated Sep 25, 2018 at 11:39 AM

A man has been found guilty of capital murder in the death of his ex-girlfriend, Quin'Qualita Jackson, who was found stabbed and strangled in the bedroom of her North Austin apartment in August 2011.

Gerald Bell, 39, was automatically sentenced to life in prison without parole after a Travis County jury deliberated for one hour and reached a unanimous verdict.

In his trial, which began this week in state district court in Travis County, prosecutors Allison Wetzell and Kelsey McKay said Bell broke into Jackson's apartment, stabbed her with a knife, wrapped an extension cord around her neck and then attempted to flee when police arrived by jumping off her second-story balcony.

Bell's attorneys countered that he had moved into the apartment with Jackson, and through their questions to witnesses, they implied that he owned most of the furniture in the residence and had paid the rent until Jackson was able to get a job as a J.C. Penny associate more than a month before the incident.

But prosecutors said the evidence against Bell was solid: A fight ensued between Jackson and Bell at the same apartment days before the deadly assault, and Bell voluntarily left with his possessions when police were called. In the days that followed, the two told friends and family members that they had ended the relationship and were no longer living together, witnesses testified.

One of Jackson's neighbors told jurors she saw Bell break down the door, and officers later caught him coming out of the apartment covered in blood; they had to use a Taser to subdue him. On the stand, Jackson's sister, Michelle Redic, recalled that she had been on the phone with Jackson when Bell's banging on the door began and that she told her sister, who sounded frightened, to hang up and call police.

In court Wednesday, Bell's friend, Alonzo Simms, testified that Bell had been drinking with them at a local restaurant the night of the shooting and that Bell later took Simms' wife's car without permission. Simms' wife, Chandra Jefferson, told jurors she reported it stolen and was frustrated that Bell would not bring it back.

Simms and Jefferson said they had allowed Bell to stay over that night because he needed a ride to a job interview the next morning.

Some of the jurors bowed their heads as they listened and watched interviews between Bell and investigators. On the recordings, Bell whimpered and sobbed as he told homicide detectives that Jackson had called and told him to come over. When he got there, he said he heard Jackson say, "Baby, I can't get out. Baby, I can't get out."

He said he knocked down the door and found her with blood in her mouth. He said he attempted to cut apart the extension cord around her neck with a knife that was his but that he had found on the floor of the apartment because he used to live there.

"I've seen 'CSI.' I've seen all those shows. That's why I ran. I didn't want a murder case on my back. She was on the floor. Blood on her lap. I put her head in my lap," he tells a detective.

In another video, before police begin questioning him about what happened, he says, "I got hair on my nails. I got blood on my nails. Don't want no cuffs on me, man. I just wanna go to the house. At the wrong place at the wrong time. I sat there and panicked and ran, and I know not to run. I shouldn't even ran; made me look guilty. Damn. Man, let me know what's going on."

Jackson, 23, had planned to move to Dallas before she was killed. She thought it would be the only way to escape her ex-boyfriend, her sister told jurors.