

News Release

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Alonza Dennis sentenced to Life Without Parole

Charleston, S.C. – After a three day trial, Defendant Alonza Dennis was found guilty of Assault and Battery with the Intent to Kill and Possession of a Weapon during a Crime of Violence. The jury deliberated less than three hours. Circuit Court Judge Roger Young sentenced Dennis to life without parole for Assault and Battery with Intent to Kill and a consecutive 5 years for Possession of a Weapon During a Crime of Violence, in the shooting of 26-year-old, Moses Alford. In South Carolina, Assault and Battery with the Intent to Kill carries a potential sentence ranging from a minimum of 0 years to a maximum of 20 years.

According to Ninth Circuit Solicitor Scarlett Wilson, Mr. Dennis had previously been convicted of Criminal Sexual Conduct in the First Degree. Wilson stated, “Because of this prior conviction and the severity of this crime, we wanted to guarantee a stiff sentence for Dennis and we filed notice of our intent to seek a mandatory life sentence.” In addition to his rape conviction, Dennis also had prior convictions for Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Third Degree, Grand Larceny, Failure to Register for the Sexual Offender Registry, and Shoplifting. The jury acquitted Dennis on the accompanying Attempted Armed Robbery charge.

Ninth Circuit Managing Assistant Solicitor Jennifer Kneece Shealy, who prosecuted the case, stated that witness testimony revealed that the victim, Moses Alford, was shot in the back, the arm and the leg in the parking lot of the Kangaroo Convenience Store on Highway 17 in McClellanville at approximately 4:00 pm on June 22, 2009. Alford had been lured to McClellanville by a co-defendant who indicated he wanted to purchase some clothing from Alford. Alford had a clothing business in Georgetown and would occasionally bring clothing items to the neighboring areas for sale.

Alford testified that Dennis got out of the vehicle occupied by three co-defendants, pointed a revolver at him, and demanded “everything.” Alford, who had a concealed weapons permit, reached for his gun when danger was imminent. Dennis fired 5 shots, emptying his weapon. Dennis fled into the woods on Highway 17 and entered the auto shop on River Road asking for a ride. Hearing the emergency vehicles approaching, Dennis continued to flee until the K-9 Unit of the Sheriff’s Office approached, having tracked him from the convenience store.

Dennis testified that he was merely shooting warning shots beside Mr. Alford, not at him. Three of the five shots struck Mr. Alford. Under Shealy’s cross-examination, Dennis indicated that five shots were necessary to warn Mr. Alford and that he was scared because one of the co-defendants reminded him of a television character from *The Wire* television show. Also on cross, Dennis told the jury that he did not use crack cocaine. When Shealy confronted Dennis with the crack pipe and lighters found in his pockets when he was arrested, Dennis stated they were just “left there.”

Shealy said, “Dennis could easily have killed Mr. Alford or an innocent bystander. The Kangaroo gas station is a popular place for kids to stop for after school snacks. Dennis clearly deserved this life sentence.”