

# For Immediate Release

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## Three Convicted in 2021 Ft. Oglethorpe Murder

On Friday September 27, 2024, 21 year-old Keishann Rowe, 20 year-old Keonte Ragland, and 19 year-old Deonna Ragland, were convicted by a Catoosa County jury for the 2021 murder of Jaylon Eberhardt, a 19 year old man from Ft. Oglethorpe.

The evidence presented over the course of a week-long trial showed that in the weeks preceding Mr. Eberhardt's murder, Keonte Ragland had a series of minor disagreements with Mr. Eberhardt, which culminated in a physical altercation between the two men. On the afternoon of September 23, 2021, Keonte Ragland, his sister Deonna Ragland, and their two friends, Keishann Rowe and Malachi Housley were socializing and smoking marijuana at the Ragland residence in the Catoosa Gardens Apartments. While at the apartment, they observed Mr. Eberhardt walking through the complex and perceived his presence in the complex as a sign of disrespect to the Raglands.

The Ragland siblings, along with Rowe and Housley then conspired to lure Mr. Eberhardt back to the Catoosa Gardens Apartments on the evening of September 23, 2021 and murder him. Deonna Ragland, 16 years-old at the time of the murder, sent Mr. Eberhardt messages over SnapChat and agreed to meet him outside at the playground of the Catoosa Gardens Apartments. Mr. Eberhardt began walking from his residence at the Oglethorpe Ridge Apartments to the Catoosa Gardens Apartments, believing he would be meeting Deonna Ragland at the playground. Unbeknownst to Mr. Eberhardt, Keonte Ragland had directed Keishann Rowe and Malachi Housley to intercept Mr. Eberhardt and kill him. While sending messages to Mr. Eberhardt encouraging him to come visit her, Deonna Ragland was simultaneously sending messages to Rowe and Housley, communicating Mr. Eberhardt's exact whereabouts so that Rowe and Housley could ambush and murder him.

When Mr. Eberhardt arrived at the playground, Deonna Ragland informed him she would not be coming out to meet him, and he began walking back home. Deonna Ragland then informed Rowe and Housley that Mr. Eberhardt was leaving the playground, and they silently followed him through the woods back to the Oglethorpe Ridge Apartments. Just as Mr. Eberhardt was about to enter the Oglethorpe Ridge complex, Housley shot him in the back and leg. Housley and Rowe fled the scene and ditched the gun in a grassy area near the apartment complex. Mr. Eberhardt, after being shot through the back, attempted to run back to his residence. He yelled, "Help me; they shot me!" shortly before collapsing on the doorstep of a Catoosa County law enforcement officer, where Mr. Eberhardt died.

Shortly after his murder, family members of Mr. Eberhardt informed law enforcement that he had been communicating with Deonna Ragland before his death. Law enforcement officers interviewed Deonna and Keonte Ragland in the hours after Mr. Eberhardt's murder, and they denied any knowledge of his murder. During the interview, Deonna Ragland had the audacity to express dismay upon being notified that Mr. Eberhardt had died. The day after Mr. Eberhardt's murder, law enforcement officers located Keishann Rowe and Malachi Housley in the grassy area where the gun used to murder Mr. Eberhardt had been discarded. Officers located incriminating text messages on their phones, implicating the Raglands as well, which detailed the plot to murder Mr. Eberhardt. Shortly thereafter, Housley confessed to his role in the murder.

Housley entered a guilty plea to Felony Murder and Aggravated Assault for his role in Mr. Eberhardt's murder in June 2023 and was sentenced to serve life in prison.

Keishann Rowe, Keonte Ragland, and Deonna Ragland were convicted of Felony Murder and Aggravated Assault after a week-long trial, commencing September 23, 2024, exactly 3 years to the day after Mr. Eberhardt's murder. At trial, the jurors had the opportunity to view dozens of text messages, social media messages, and digital evidence, which put on display, in black-and-white, the cold, callous, and calculating nature of the defendants' plot to murder Mr. Eberhardt.

After a sentencing hearing on October 24, 2024, Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge Don W. Thompson sentenced Keishann Rowe, Keonte Ragland, and Deonna Ragland to serve a life sentence in the Georgia Department of Corrections.

The case was investigated by Georgia Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Steve Rogers, Jr. The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Deanna Reisman and Zachary Trippe.

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