

# For Immediate Release

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## **LaFayette Man Convicted of Raping 13-Year-Old Girl**

**November 19, 2021, Walker County, GA** – Charles James Spikes was convicted by a Walker County jury on Wednesday afternoon of rape and child molestation for his sexual assault on a 13-year-old girl in 2017. District Attorney Chris Arnt prosecuted the case and Chief Public Defender Jad Johnson represented Mr. Spikes. The case was tried before Superior Court Judge Hon. Kristina Cook Graham. Spikes will have a sentencing hearing on December 7, 2021 at 1:00pm.

In May of 2017, Spikes was living with his girlfriend and her teenage sons in an apartment complex in LaFayette, Georgia. On the day of the rape, a number of teens who lived in the apartment complex were hanging out in and around Spikes' apartment. Spikes and some of his friends were also present. The others left the apartment, leaving the victim alone with Spikes in the living room. A number of witnesses testified that Spikes was being overly "touchy and handy" with the victim that day. Another teenage girl, a friend of the victim, testified that she left the apartment after Spikes had started touching her and put his hand on her thigh.

Once Spikes was alone with the victim, he pulled her up from the couch and pulled her into a bathroom, closing and locking the door. The victim was not sure what Spikes was up to as she and her family had trusted him up until this day. Once in the bathroom Spikes grabbed the victim's head and forced her to perform oral sex on him. He then pulled down her shorts and pushed her over the sink and raped her. Spikes ejaculated onto the victim's back and then wiped it up with some toilet paper, which he flushed away. Spikes then wiped the tears off the victim's face and told her to leave. One of Spikes' girlfriend's teenage sons was inside his bedroom and came into to the hallway to see the victim leaving the apartment and the defendant exiting the bathroom.

The victim was interviewed by forensic interviewer Holly Kittle at the Children's Advocacy Center. The victim gave graphic details about her rape at the hands of Spikes and a recording of the interview was played for the jury. A specialized sexual assault examination was performed by Nurse Lisa Gilliland of the Sexual Assault Center. During this exam the nurse found multiple vaginal abrasions. The results were consistent with the events described by the victim and were also consistent with sexual assault. The victim's mother testified about the emotional devastation suffered by the victim. The victim had gone from a happy, popular child and top athlete, to only taking online classes, dropping out of all sports, abandoning all her friendships and basically just staying in her room all the time. The victim's mother told the jury that Spikes took her daughter and she never really came back.

Spikes had been tried and convicted of rape in this same case in 2018. The case was appealed and the Georgia Court of Appeals reversed the case on a legal technicality. The court had cleared the courtroom for the testimony of the minor victim, in accordance with Georgia law, but the Court of Appeals took issue with the manner in which the courtroom was cleared and ordered a new trial. The young victim was thus forced to relive this horrible assault a second time.

District Attorney Arnt stated, "I am glad the jury held this rapist accountable for the devastation he inflicted on the child victim. Hopefully, the fact that two juries have now heard and believed in the victim, will help her begin the journey to get her life back. This prosecution demonstrates my, and my office's strong commitment to protecting our children and holding those who harm them accountable. The Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit is the toughest circuit in the State of Georgia when it comes to punishing sex offenders and child molesters."

Arnt also expressed how proud he and his staff are of the victim and the courage she displayed in standing up to her rapist and facing him in court a second time. The Children's Advocacy Center and the Sexual Assault Center provided critical assistance in prosecuting this case. Arnt also noted the dedicated work of the victim witness staff of the District Attorney's office in assisting the victim and her family through this case and providing support throughout the process. Advocate Ashley Nicholson played a vital role in working with the victim's family, supporting them and at times crying with them. She also was instrumental in tracking down some of the witnesses who had moved away in the years between the two trials.

*Statement from the Victim's Mother*

***1,641 days later we finally can put closure***

*"To a life changing event that occurred. With the help of Mr. Chris Arnt and the ladies from the sexual assault facility out of Fort Oglethorpe, GA. As a parent you never expect anything like this to happen to you or your children. My daughter and I couldn't have asked for a better team of people to represent us, not only once but twice because of the retrial. As we sat and watched Mr. Arnt fight for justice day after day, as the emotions and fears of reliving the horrific incident occurred, we never sat alone. He never gave up hope nor let us. They say angels walk amongst us and I truly believe that. They walk amongst us in our small town of Walker County and they hold up justice where justice needs to be served. Thank you all so much for hard work and dedication."*

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