

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jury convicts gang member for aggravated assault and other charges
State vs. Tyrell Maleek Corley

April 2, 2021 – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that earlier this week a Cherokee County jury found Tyrell Maleek Corley, 24, guilty on charges related to an aggravated assault with a stolen firearm.

On June 6, 2018, Corley was involved in a fist fight in a McDonald's parking lot on Ridge Road in Canton. During the fight, Corley brandished a firearm and chased a man through the parking lot. He then gave the firearm to a 17-year-old girl, who fled the scene and hid the weapon in a wastebasket at a nearby business.

Corley initially told law enforcement that he was the victim, but Canton police officers were able to determine his involvement after interviewing witnesses on the scene and reviewing surveillance footage. Canton Police also found the hidden weapon and quickly determined that it was stolen.

After his arrest, Corley arrived at the adult detention center, where Cherokee Sheriff's Office deputies conducted a strip search and found hidden drugs, specifically 9 pills, which tested positive as a schedule IV controlled substance.

Over the course of the investigation, Corley was identified as a member of Sex-Money-Murder (SMM), which is a set of the Bloods criminal street gang. One of Corley's tattoos suggests that he holds "rank" in the Bloods.

Corley's gang affiliation complicated the investigation and prosecution of the case since many witnesses were unwilling to be forthcoming or cooperative.

This behavior is consistent with gang culture in which no one wants to "snitch," said Inv. J.P. Miller, an investigator in the District Attorney's Office who served as an expert witness during the trial. Miller explained that gangs use this culture of silence, as well as intimidation and threats, to maintain power and control. Miller was one of 18 witnesses who testified.

At the conclusion of the three-day trial, the jury deliberated for two hours before reaching a unanimous decision, finding Corley guilty of aggravated assault, possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, theft by receiving stolen property, possession of a schedule IV controlled substance (benzodiazepine), tampering with evidence, crossing the guard lines with drugs, and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Corley was also found to be a recidivist offender under Georgia law, which requires him to serve out his prison sentence without the possibility of parole.

“The defendant relied on the gang culture of silence to protect him from accountability, but the jury saw through that and recognized him for the danger that he poses to our community,” said Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State. “It is never acceptable to threaten someone with a gun, but this case was especially troubling when you factor in the gang element and the fact that this incident happened at dinnertime with children and others in close proximity.”

After the jury issued its verdict on March 31, Superior Court Judge Tony Baker pointed out that Corley has not taken responsibility for his actions, even after his conviction. He encouraged Corley to use his time in custody to review his actions and better himself. Judge Baker then sentenced Corley to 30 years, with the first 15 years to be served in confinement. Conditions of probation include 120 hours of community service, substance abuse evaluation and treatment, no alcohol or drugs, no weapons, no contact with the codefendant, no association with other gang members, and barred from entering Cherokee County.

“While this case posed unique challenges, I can assure you that in Cherokee County a culture of silence will not result in a failure of justice. If witnesses are unwilling or afraid to come forward, we will still prosecute these crimes when the evidence supports those criminal charges,” said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. “Our community demands that we hold violent offenders accountable.”

The trial, which took place March 29-31, was the first Superior Court jury trial held in the county since February 2020. Jury trial COVID-19 protocols were followed to ensure the safety of all participants. The judge, jury, prosecution, defense, and individual witnesses attended in-person proceedings in one courtroom, while the audience watched via *Zoom* in another courtroom. Additional safety protocols included temperature checks, social distancing, mandated masks, and sanitizing the witness stand after each witness.

The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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