

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



SHANNON WALLACE
District Attorney

Cherokee County Justice Center
90 North Street, Suite 390
Canton, GA 30114

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cyndi Crossland
Public Information Officer
cbcrossland@cherokeega.com
770-479-1488

**Three Men Found Guilty of Gang-Related Murders and Other Charges
Are Sentenced to Life**

January 13, 2022 – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that Byron Elrod, 35, Brody Samples, 28, and Jeremy Zellous, 33, were sentenced on January 10, 2022, for their part in gang-related crimes that occurred in Canton in 2017. A Cherokee County jury convicted the three men after a trial that ended on November 18, 2021.

The charges stem from a series of violent events that occurred on Crisler Street in Canton in the summer of 2017. Following a June 24, 2017 street fight, one group posted a video bragging about winning the fight. This was perceived as disrespect, leading Elrod and Zellous, who held a leadership position within the Bloods criminal street gang, to retaliate.

The following day, June 25, 2017, Elrod, Zellous, and Samples ambushed William Randall and Jamesly Baptist on Crisler Street. More than 70 shots were fired, hitting nearby churches, homes, and vehicles. William Randall, 23, and Tony Samples, 26, were both killed as a result.

Then, on July 11, 2017, Elrod committed a drive-by shooting on Crisler Street in an attempt to intimidate witnesses who he believed were “snitching” in the case.

Canton Police responded to 911 calls and investigated these crimes in collaboration with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

The five-week jury trial began on October 18, 2021, including jury selection, testimony, and arguments. More than 50 witnesses testified. The State also presented evidence of gang association for each of the defendants, as well as witness intimidation that occurred after the arrests. Former Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney David Holmes and Assistant District Attorney Megan Hertel handled the prosecution for the State.

After 18 days of evidence, the jury deliberated for two days before announcing its verdict on November 18, 2021, convicting the three men of 59 counts in total, including felony murder, aggravated assault, and violation of the Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act.

“This was a very thoughtful, diligent, hard-working group of jurors. Based on the verdict, it’s clear that they combed through and inspected every single count and held the State to its burden of proof,” said ADA Hertel, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State. “Through this verdict and sentencing, we have the opportunity to take a step toward the eradication of criminal gang activity in our county.”

At the January 10 hearing, William Randall’s sister provided a victim impact statement in which she talked about the tremendous loss she and her family have suffered. During the sentencing hearing, the State recommended the maximum sentence for murder of life without the possibility of parole for each defendant.

“In Cherokee County, gang activity, which is a clear and present danger to our community, has continued to increase, with many felony crimes directly related to criminal street gangs,” said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. “Criminal gang activity will not be tolerated in Cherokee County. We will continue to fight hard to dismantle gangs and will not allow fear and violence to infiltrate our community and make our neighborhoods unsafe.”

Judge David Cannon, Jr. sentenced Byron Elrod to life in prison plus an additional 15 years to serve in confinement pursuant to the recidivist statute of O.C.G.A. §17-10-7(a) and (c), followed by 30 years of probation. Brody Samples was sentenced to life with the possibility of parole plus an additional 5 years to serve in confinement. Jeremy Zellous was sentenced to life with the possibility of parole, plus an additional 15 years to serve in confinement.

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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