

Judge Schroeder sentences Williams to concurrent natural life sentences for murder of two juveniles

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EDWARDSVILLE - **Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons** announced today that **Terril J. Williams** (d.o.b. 02/12/1981) was sentenced to two concurrent natural life sentences for the murder of two juveniles in January 1997.

"I am thankful for **Judge Schroeder's** decision to impose the maximum sentence allowed in this case. The families of the victims provided powerful testimony of the anguish and pain caused by the defendant. They should be an incredible inspiration to us all. The strength of their faith allows them to forgive these terrible crimes, but the law should never forget what the defendant did. This was a heinous and cold-blooded murder of two teenage boys, and the only proper sentence short of execution was life in prison."

Williams was originally convicted of two counts of First Degree Murder by a Madison County jury on February 5, 1998, following a trial in Edwardsville. Jurors heard

evidence presented by **Assistant State's Attorney Keith Jensen** supporting the State's charges that Williams shot and killed Darryl A. Womack and James E. Patterson Jr. on January 30th, 1997. Autopsy results confirmed that both victims suffered fatal gunshot wounds consistent with witness testimony. Circuit Judge Charles Romani issued Williams' original sentence of two concurrent natural life sentences with no possibility of parole on April 28, 1998.

On December 7, 2015, the Fifth District Appellate Court, following the 2012 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Miller v. Alabama*, found Williams' sentence of mandatory natural life without parole in violation of the Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment because the defendant was a juvenile at the time of his conviction. Williams' case was reversed and remanded to Madison County for re-sentencing.

Associate Judge Neil Schroeder heard testimony from former **Alton Police Chief David Hayes**, who assisted in the investigation, as well as several family members of both victims. First Assistant State's Attorney Jennifer Mudge and Assistant State's Attorney Lauren Heischmidt presented evidence supporting the State's argument that the necessary aggravating factors were present in this case for the original sentence of natural life imprisonment to be the appropriate sentence.

Gibbons thanked First Assistant Mudge, Assistant State's Attorneys Heischmidt and Jensen, the Alton Police Department, and all of the investigative personnel whose hard work on this case, including today's hearing, contributed to the successful outcome.