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## City man convicted of first-degree murder

Jun 8th, 2012 · 0 Comment

**Jury identifies Dante Lawrence as triggerman in 2010 fatal shooting**

By Kathleen Brady Shea, Managing Editor, CoatesvilleTimes.com

WEST CHESTER — After more than four hours of deliberations, a Chester County Court jury Friday evening found a Coatesville resident guilty of first-degree murder.

The panel of four men and eight women convicted Dante L. Lawrence, 30, of fatally shooting Randy M. Vaughn, 31, in the 200 block of Diamond Street on Jan. 5, 2010. The conviction carries an automatic life sentence.

During closing arguments, Lawrence's attorney, Michael J. Skinner, insisted the evidence pointed to Shamaur Hall, who was with Lawrence in the SUV witnesses described as speeding from the homicide scene. "Dante Lawrence did not commit this crime," Skinner said.

But Assistant District Attorney Carlos A. Barraza countered that Hall "had no motive." He got involved because Lawrence, who was a close friend, gave him a sketchy description of someone who had just tried to break into Lawrence's Chester Avenue residence, Barraza said.

Lawrence testified on Thursday that Hall saw someone matching the description at the nearby Midway bar, and then came and picked up Lawrence so he could verify the man's identity. By the time the pair returned to the bar, the man was gone, Lawrence testified. Minutes later, Hall pointed to someone on Diamond Street, identifying him as the suspect, Lawrence said.

"I told Shamaur to go back around the block," Lawrence testified, adding that Hall did that, stopped the vehicle, got out, and approached Vaughn, who tried to run. Hall grabbed him and he fell right before Hall shot him, Lawrence testified, his voice cracking. "I just wanted to get out of there, man," he said. "I didn't know that was going to happen to that boy..." Hall testified that it was Lawrence who jumped out of the car and fired several shots.

U.S. Marshals apprehended Lawrence near Atlanta seven months after the shooting. Skinner said Lawrence had planned to turn himself in but wanted to get money to secure an attorney first; Barraza said he was trying to evade authorities.

Lawrence, whose criminal history includes a guilty plea to drug charges in 2001, was also convicted of illegal



Dante L. Lawrence was found guilty of first-degree murder.

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firearms possession. He will be sentenced at a later date by Senior Judge Thomas G. Gavin, who presided over the week-long trial.

"The city of Coatesville is a safer place today because this murderer will spend the rest of his life in prison," said Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan, calling the conviction a team effort led by Barraza that included the Coatesville Police Department and the Chester County Detectives.

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