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HAKEEM ROBINSON, LEROY WHITAKER FOUND GUILTY OF MURDER

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that a Duval County jury found Hakeem Robinson and Leroy Whitaker guilty of First-Degree Murder in the January 2020 killing of Charles McCormick. Whitaker was also found guilty of Burglary with Assault or Battery. With the verdict, Robinson and Whitaker face mandatory life sentences in Florida State Prison. The Honorable Tatiana Salvador will formally sentence both at a later date.

The killing stemmed from an ongoing dispute between two groups, with this murder as retaliation for McCormick's rap song which disparaged Robinson's dead relative. On the morning of Jan. 15, 2020, Robinson, Whitaker, and a third co-defendant, Dominique Barner, followed McCormick from his home to an employment center on Merrill Road. When McCormick left the center, Robinson gunned down McCormick in broad daylight. Robinson jumped back into the car driven by Barner (Whitaker was a passenger) and Barner sped away. The killing was captured on a witness's dash camera. An officer with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office heard the gunfire from the parking lot and pursued the car into a nearby neighborhood. They crashed the car and ran; Robinson went one way, Whitaker and Barner went another. To avoid police, Whitaker and Barner broke into a woman's house; they held her captive, took her phone, stole her husband's clothes to disguise themselves, and called Robinson's father to pick them up. Robinson was picked up by a woman at a nearby apartment complex.

"Five years ago, Hakeem Robinson and Leroy Whitaker stalked a man and gunned him down in broad daylight because of disputes and drill rap. Today, a jury held them accountable for their brazen crimes," said State Attorney Melissa Nelson. "This was an incredible effort by law enforcement and our team that takes two killers off our streets. Thank you to the jury for their time and dedication."

The case was investigated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by a team of Assistant State Attorneys.