

Gray is freed in 2013 murder

His statement to detectives suppressed after 2-day hearing in Eddie Best's death

By **BOB HIGH**
Staff Writer

Demetrius/Demetric Ladale Gray, 39, was released from jail here Tuesday afternoon nearly three years after his arrest on a murder charge when Superior Court Judge Douglas Sasser ruled the videoed confession could not be used against Gray.

Gray had been arrested in June 2013 as a co-defendant in the stabbing death of Eddie Jerome Best here on May 24, 2013.

Beverly Williams, 34, who pleaded in the murder two weeks ago and was sent to prison for 14 to 18 years,

told local police detectives from the beginning that Gray was not present at the time she stabbed Best, and "was not involved." She maintained the fact that Gray was not part of the murder when she pleaded.

The "confession" was seen by Sasser, and it showed an obviously less than alert Gray finally admitting to Detectives Bobby Fowler and Tedd Dixon that he had a part in Best's death, plus robbery of the victim in Williams' West Columbus Street home.

'In trouble from start'

Sasser ruled the "confession" could not be used, and the district attorney's staff declined to further prosecute Gray.

"This case against Demetric Gray was in trouble from the start," defense attorney William C. "Bill" Gore Jr. said this week. "I'm grateful for Judge Sasser's ruling because it came in a case where an innocent man had been charged."

Gore's motion to suppress the confession came after Gray was found peeling shrimp on June 12, 2013 - about three weeks after Williams killed Best - and he was taken into custody by local police.

Gray was "severely impaired" by drinking a half of a fifth of gin, taking seven Percocet pills and two "hits" of cocaine the day he was interviewed, Gore's motion showed. "His speech was slurred and mumbled, and many of his responses were hesitant and unintelligible," Gore contended.

Bloody knife print

"Officers Fowler and Dixon falsely represented to Gray that his fingerprints were found in the house where Best was killed, on a cut-up credit card, and on a bloody knife found at the scene of the homicide," although "none of these statements were true," Gore said. The lawyer said the print found on the bloody knife was not matched to anyone.

Dixon spent nearly a full day on the witness stand last Friday in the first day of the hearing, with Fowler spending about a half-day testifying Tuesday. Both detectives said they still felt Gray was guilty of helping in the murder.

Both officers said they saw no signs of Gray's intoxication when he was taken into custody in 2013. "Both testified they knew him, and he seemed fine to them," Gore said this week.

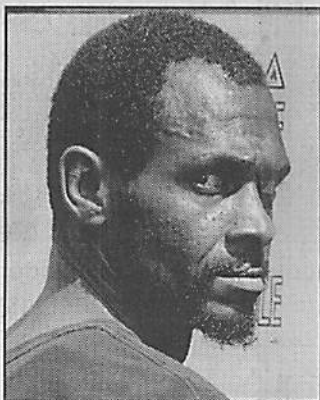
'No deception'

"Although he finally admitted his part in the murder, the video repeatedly shows Gray saying he wasn't present and didn't have anything to do with it," the attorney added.

Gore said his investigative team gave Gray a lie-detector test, although not admissible in a court trial, and the results showed "no deception" in Gray's responses to two pointed questions asking if he had been a part of Best's murder.

Gore said he feels the district attorney's assistant prosecutors "did the right thing" in not pursuing the murder charge against Gray.

Fowler and Dixon were "separated" from the Whiteville Police Department late last year.



Demetrius Ladale Gray