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43 CRIP RECEIVES 60 YEARS

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On Thursday, February 15, 2018, a Victoria jury sentenced Dijohn Lamont King, 19, to 60 years in prison in each count of Aggravated Robbery, 20 years in prison (the maximum sentence allowed by law) for Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon, 20 years in prison (the maximum sentence allowed by law) for Burglary of a Habitation, and 2 years state jail (the maximum sentence allowed by law) for Theft of a Firearm. The previous day, the jury found the Defendant guilty of all five counts.

The evidence showed that when the Defendant was 16 or 17 years of age he entered the 43 Crips gang. On September 20, 2016, the Defendant acted as a look-out for another individual that was attempting to enter the window of a teenage girl. VPD Offices arrived to question the Defendant and ultimately arrested him. While the Defendant was in handcuffs and in the presence of law enforcement, he threatened to harm the civilian witnesses that reported the crime. He told the witnesses that "There's going to be some [explicative]" when he got out and that he was a Crip. Also during the arrest, the Defendant threatened to assault an officer of the VPD.

On November 18, 2106, the Defendant was found in the Bell Tower area at approximately two in the morning. VPD Officer Jason Stone was patrolling the area and detained the Defendant. A few feet away from the Defendant was multiple firearms. In the pocket of the Defendant was a stolen wallet. It was concluded that the Defendant and other individuals had broken into several vehicles in the area.

On January 30, 2017 at approximately 10pm, SF was returning home from work. He parked his car a few feet away from his apartment and was about to exit his vehicle. Before he did so, a gun was pressed against his throat by a male. Another male whispered in SF's ear that SF was going to die. The two males proceeded to take SF's property and then ran from the scene. As they ran from the scene, two young men gave chase in attempt to apprehend the aggravated robbers. One of the young men testified during trial that the male with the gun in his hand that was running off was the Defendant. The two aggravated robbers made it to a getaway car where they pointed a

gun at the two young men in pursuit and told the two young men to stop following them. The aggravated robbers then drove off in a Silver Ford Escape.

A mere four hours later, three armed men entered the house of CH and BM. One of the offenders had a shotgun. It was shown at trial that one of the men entered through the bathroom window of the house and opened the front door to let the other two in. While the three offenders were inside of the home, they made CH and BM get facedown on the ground. While CH and BM were face down, the three males ransacked the home, held CH and BM at gunpoint and one of the males proceeded to hit CH in the back of the head with a firearm. Before the three offenders left, they discussed whether or not to kill CH and BM before leaving. Firearms, phones and gaming consoles were taken from CH and BM. Since CH and BM were without phones, they drove around seeking help and came across Officer Matthew Dailey in the parking lot of Academy.

Officer Matthew Dailey was in the process of typing his report for the Aggravated Robbery of SF that occurred four hours earlier. He quickly suspected that the same offenders were involved in both Aggravated Robberies. Approximately 24 hours later, Deputy Ernest Castillo of the Victoria County Sheriff's Office encountered a Silver Ford Escape. The Defendant was a passenger in that vehicle and he had a shotgun between his legs that was consistent with the shotgun that one offender had during the CH and BM home invasion. The Defendant was arrested.

Later, lead investigator Melissa Rendon of the VPD obtained a search warrant to search the Silver Ford Escape. During the search of the vehicle, Detective Amy Grothe found a pistol that was stolen from CH. Stolen checks from SF were also found on the Defendant's seat. Robert Nichols of the VPD also found other stolen items that were later learned were taken from other burglary of motor vehicle offenses.

While at the jail, the Defendant made phone calls admitting to his guilt and referencing stolen property inside of the vehicle. Even after the jury convicted the Defendant of five counts involving the home invasion of CH and BM, the Defendant admitted to Lt. Chris Garcia that he was still an active member of the 43 Crips.

At punishment, the Defense argued that the Defendant's age should be mitigating. However, ADA Johnson responded that taking it easy on young offenders would invite gangs to recruit even younger members if gangs knew that the younger members would be dealt light sentences from the community. ADA Johnson asked the jury to send a solid message to the Crips and young offenders that this type of behavior is not acceptable in our community. She explained that even though physical items like guns, wallets and phones could be replaced; there are other things the victims will never get back like trust, security, and peace. She asked for a sentence of 60 years on the Aggravated Robbery Counts, 20 years on the Burglary of Habitation and Aggravated Assault Counts and 2 years on the Theft of a Firearm Count. The jury responded with their complete support and granted those exact sentences.

ADA Johnson and ADA Tom Dillard prosecuted with the assistance of Victim's Assistance Coordinator Sara Bill and Investigator Steve Allen. Our office would like to thank the Victoria Police Department (including but not limited to Melissa Rendon, Amy Grothe, Matthew Dailey, Robert Nichols, Jonathan Hein, Jason Stone, Danielle Turner) and Victoria County Sheriff's Office (including but not limited to Deputy Ernest Castillo) for their great work! We also extend our sincerest thanks to the jurors who did a wonderful job of protecting their community.