

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Life in Prison Plus 30 Years for Murder of Man, Woman, and Unborn Child
State vs. Kristopher Martin Johnson

February 12, 2025 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that during a February 6 non-negotiated sentencing hearing, Superior Court Judge Tony Baker ordered that Kristopher Martin Johnson, 34, serve life in prison with the possibility of parole plus 30 years for a double murder and feticide.

Johnson was sentenced on malice murder (2 counts), feticide, exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony (2 counts).

During the sentencing hearing, Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe, of the Domestic Violence Unit, presented the facts of the case as follows.

On the evening of March 23, 2021, Johnson fatally shot his pregnant girlfriend Carla Marie Payne, 30, and her uncle Thomas Richard “Doodle” Donaldson, 65, at a home the three of them shared on Old Donaldson Road in Canton.

The defendant then left the home, driving his Chevrolet Avalanche truck to the Ingles parking lot in Canton, where he called his mother, who advised him to call law enforcement. At 8:11 p.m., 23 minutes after he called his mother, Johnson called 911 to report the shooting.

Canton Police and Cherokee Sheriff’s Office arrived at the home and found Payne and Donaldson, deceased, in separate bedrooms. A medical examiner from the GBI Division of Forensic Sciences determined that the cause of death was homicide.

Payne had gunshot wounds to her left upper chest, left lateral chest, left lower chest, left arm, and left arm/chest. Her autopsy also determined that she was carrying a male fetus of approximately 30 weeks gestational age. Donaldson had two gunshot wounds to his abdomen and right thigh, which injured the right femoral artery. He also had gunshot wounds to his left arm, left forearm, and right forearm.

“Carla was preparing to welcome baby Mason into the world while the father of her child was living a double life, messaging other women and purchasing firearms. He took the lives of three precious souls, one of whom never even got the chance to take his first breath,” said Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe, of the Domestic Violence Unit, who prosecuted this case on behalf of the State.

In an interview with law enforcement, Johnson claimed he blacked out and the only thing he recalled about the evening was arguing with Payne. Johnson also stated that he had not been taking his medications at the time.

“While the defendant suffers from mental illness, there is nothing in the evidence to indicate that his mental illness was the cause of this incident. Instead, the evidence shows that Carla tried to end the relationship, and he responded by ending her life, the life of their unborn child, and the life of her uncle,” said Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe.

During the hearing, the Court heard four victim impact statements from Payne and Donaldson’s family, as well as one statement from the defendant’s family.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Superior Court Judge Tony Baker considered arguments by both the State and the Defense before adjudging Johnson guilty but mentally ill and sentencing him to life in prison with the possibility of parole plus 30 years. The designation of guilty but mentally ill will ensure that the Georgia Department of Corrections assumes the responsibility of addressing Johnson’s mental health needs while he is incarcerated.

“Over the course of nearly four years, the family of these innocent victims has regularly attended court hearings as they steadfastly advocated for justice in this case,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “May this sentence bring some measure of peace as they continue to mourn the lives of their loved ones who were so tragically taken that night.”

This case was investigated by Cherokee Sheriff’s Office with assistance from Canton Police. It was prosecuted by Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe, of the Domestic Violence Unit, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic violence, please contact the Cherokee Family Violence Center, CFVC.org, 770-479-1703 (24/7 crisis hotline). In case of an emergency, call 911.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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