

NEWS

Murder acquittal in 2017 homicide sets Augusta man free

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Augusta Chronicle

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An Augusta man was acquitted of murder Wednesday after being originally charged in the death of 25-year-old Fredrick Booker in 2017.

Laron D. Mickens originally pleaded not guilty in Richmond County Superior Court earlier this year to charges of murder and weapon violations. Mickens case originally went to trial in February 2019, but the jury was unable to reach a unanimous verdict and a mistrial was declared.

Booker was shot five times outside his own apartment building at Heritage Apartments for reasons that remain unclear. The defense claimed Mickens shot Booker in self defense.

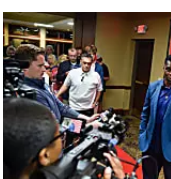
The Augusta Chronicle previously reported that when questioned after the shooting, Mickens' girlfriend originally stated Mickens was not there the night of the shooting but later changed her account and told investigators and the jury during the 2019 trial that Mickens shot in self-defense.

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She testified that when Booker came out of his apartment, he had a gun, and she called out a warning to Mickens before Booker shot first. Richmond County deputies didn't find a gun at the scene or inside Booker's apartment, which he shared with his girlfriend.

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However, Booker's girlfriend testified that he had gone downstairs empty-handed since, to keep her child safe, she didn't allow guns in her home. She testified in 2019 that she heard gunshots, went to the window and saw Mickens and another man get into car. She testified that she recognized Mickens because he was a neighbor at the apartment complex.

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Defense attorney Keith Johnson said Thursday Mickens was acquitted in a jury trial due to lack of identification from the witnesses.

“I am pleased that my client was acquitted of all charges. We are very grateful for the jury verdict and send our condolences to the family of Mr. Booker,” Johnson said.

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