



Riverside County District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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JURORS DECIDE DEATH FOR MAN WHO MURDERED HIS FORMER GIRLFRIEND AND LIT HER ON FIRE IN FRONT OF HER CHILDREN

RIVERSIDE – Today, Nov. 21, 2014, a Riverside County jury decided that a man who shot his former girlfriend and lit her on fire in front of her children should be put to death.

Jurors began deliberating mid-afternoon Thursday and deliberated until about mid-morning Friday before deciding that Tyrone Harts, DOB: 12-23-72, of Riverside, should be sentenced to death. Harts was ordered by Judge Christian Thierbach to return to Dept. 43 at the Hall of Justice in Riverside on Jan. 30, 2015, to be formally sentenced.

On Oct. 30, 2014, a Riverside County jury convicted Harts of one count each of murder and attempted murder, as well as five counts of felony child endangerment and one count of being a felon in possession of a handgun. The jury also found a special circumstance allegation of lying in wait. That finding made Harts eligible for the death penalty. The same jurors then heard testimony in the penalty phase before deciding that Harts should be sentenced to death.

On Feb. 21, 2011, Harts shot his former girlfriend, Brandi Morales, in the Moreno Valley home she shared with her six children who, at the time of the murder, ranged in age from 6 to 15. Harts had previously lived at the house and the couple had broken off their relationship several weeks earlier. On the night of the murder, Harts had earlier called the home and spoken to each of the children, telling one to leave a sliding glass door unlocked.

At about 12:30 a.m. on Feb. 21, 2011, the two oldest children were awakened by the screams of their mother from the upstairs master bedroom. The oldest boy grabbed a knife from the kitchen, went to see what was wrong, and saw his mother being held down. Harts then pulled out a handgun and fired at the boy who then ran downstairs. The shots woke up the other four younger children who then saw their mother lit on fire by the attacker. The children started filling cups with water in an attempt to put out the fire. Police and fire personnel were called to the scene and the victim was pronounced dead at the scene. An autopsy showed she had been shot in the torso and suffered first- and second-degree burns to 50 to 60 percent of her body.

The case, RIF1100477, was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Jared Haringsma of the DA's Homicide Unit.