



RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE
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MAN ARRESTED, CHARGES FILED IN MORENO VALLEY COLD CASE MURDER

RIVERSIDE – More than nine years ago, Erica Johnson was found murdered in her Moreno Valley apartment. Her throat had been cut and her 19-month-old son, wearing a dirty diaper and with his mother's blood on him, was found near her body.

On Thursday, Feb. 8, 2018, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office filed charges in the cold case murder of the 25-year-old victim, who worked as a clerk at the courthouse in Banning. Johnson was pregnant when her body was found on Aug. 31, 2008.

Russell Lynwood Austin, DOB: 11-16-83, of Moreno Valley, has been charged with two counts of murder with a special circumstance allegation of committing multiple murders and two sentencing enhancements of personal use of a weapon during a felony. Austin is believed to be the biological father of the second murder victim, the 12-week-old fetus.

At the time of the initial investigation, Austin was determined to be a potential suspect but there was not enough evidence then to file criminal charges. However, in 2014, a DNA "hit" connected Austin to Johnson's murder and the crime scene. Riverside County sheriff's Inv. Jason Corey of the sheriff's Cold Case Unit led a new investigation into the case, working closely with Inv. Ryan Bodmer of the DA's Cold Case Unit. That investigation ultimately led to enough evidence to charge Austin with the murders of Johnson and the fetus.

On Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2017, Austin was arrested in Moreno Valley by members of the sheriff's Special Investigation Bureau. He was booked into the Robert Presley Detention Center in Riverside where he is being held without bail.

Austin is scheduled to be arraigned at 1:30 p.m. today, Feb. 8, in Dept. 41 at the Hall of Justice in Riverside.

The case, RIF1800692, is being prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Michael Kersse of the DA's Cold Case Unit.

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