

Building a Future on the Mainland, He Returned to St. Thomas to Face Trial and Was Killed Before the Verdict

Desie Conrad Henry Jr., 32, had enrolled in a truck driving program in North Carolina and postponed the start to appear in court in St. Thomas. Hours before jurors were expected to deliver a verdict in the kidnapping case against him, he was shot dead.

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Desie Conrad Henry Jr. was rebuilding his life on the mainland and preparing to begin a truck driving program in North Carolina. By. CARL R. WILLIAMS

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ST. THOMAS — A 32-year-old man who had spent years rebuilding his life on the mainland and had returned to the U.S. Virgin Islands to face criminal charges was shot and killed Thursday

morning in St. Thomas, just hours before a jury was expected to deliver a verdict in his case.

Desie Conrad Henry Jr. was preparing to go to court to await the jury's decision when he was fatally shot in the Paul M. Pearson Gardens housing community, according to information provided by police and his attorney.

VIPD Director of Communications Glen Dratte confirmed the victim's identity as Henry.

During an interview with The Consortium, Henry's attorney Carl R. Williams described the loss as deeply troubling and noted that Henry had complied with every requirement placed upon him throughout the judicial process.

Williams said Henry had fully participated in the trial proceedings and remained present throughout the case, which began after [his arrest in September 2020](#).

"We participated in the trial process. We put forward a what I believe was a great case, a great defense," Williams said. "I believe, had the jury been given the opportunity to deliberate, it's my personal feeling that the jury would have acquitted him of all of the charges that were remaining."

According to Williams, the court had already dismissed several of the counts Henry faced. He was one of two co-defendants in [a case involving Troy Harrigan](#) and allegations that the two men participated in a kidnapping.

Williams said the defense presented evidence that Henry had not been present at the scene. "Our defense showed that he wasn't there," Williams said. The victim of the kidnapping "had already identified another individual, and my client had a good alibi." The defense argued mistaken identity and presented an alibi supported by the court's instructions to the jury.

Before the jury could deliberate, however, Henry was killed.

"So basically, he was murdered before the jury could have given its verdict?" The Consortium asked. "Yes," Williams replied.

Williams stressed that he had no information linking the shooting to the case. "I have no idea whether this shooting was tied in with this case or not," he said.

He also noted that Henry had not lived in the territory for several years before returning to face the charges. According to Williams, Henry had not provided information against anyone during the case. "He certainly didn't testify, certainly didn't call anybody's name, didn't throw anyone under the bus," Williams said.

Williams said Henry returned to the Virgin Islands specifically to comply with court requirements while pursuing plans to improve his life.

According to Williams, Henry had enrolled in a truck driving program in Charlotte, North Carolina, scheduled to begin on February 9, but postponed the start in order to appear in court.

"The pre trial conference for this trial also was on February 9," Williams said. "So he forwent his first day of school to be here, as required by the court, and then he was going to see the matter through and then head back to school."

Williams said Henry had previously worked as an Amazon delivery driver during the Covid-19 pandemic and developed a strong interest in transportation.

“He had been a Amazon delivery driver all the way through Covid and found a real joy in being able to deliver goods to people that way,” Williams said.

Henry’s longer-term goal, according to Williams, was to start his own business. “He was looking forward to starting his own transportation company,” Williams said.

Reflecting on the years he represented Henry, Williams said the case had significantly disrupted the young man’s life.

“I had the opportunity to get to know him over five and a half years,” Williams said. “That's how long it took the government to bring this case.”

“It was a complete and utter disruption to his life for five and a half years, and he felt every minute of it,” Williams added.

Police Investigation

The VIPD confirmed that Henry was the victim of the fatal shooting.

According to police, the incident occurred Monday morning in the Paul M. Pearson Gardens housing community.

At approximately 8:43 a.m., the department’s ShotSpotter system detected five rounds fired in the area.

Shortly after the alert, police said multiple calls were received reporting that a person was down. Responding officers arrived on the scene and confirmed the incident as a homicide.

The investigation remains active, with multiple units working to gather evidence and determine the circumstances surrounding the killing.

Authorities are asking members of the public to assist investigators.

Anyone who may have seen or heard anything, or who may have information related to the case, is urged to contact 911 or the VIPD.