

ESSEX COUNTY PROSECUTORS OFFICE PRESS RELEASE



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Subject: Newark Man Sentenced to Life in Prison for Murdering Orange Man
Date: March 29, 2019
Category: Homicide
Defendant(s): Zaki Jones

March 29, 2019

Newark Man Sentenced to Life in Prison for Murder

Newark — Acting Essex County Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens, II, announced that Zaki Jones, 36, of Newark was sentenced to life in prison today by the Honorable Verna Leath, Judge of the Superior Court, for the murder of Naji Everett, 26, of Orange.

On Dec. 17, 2015 Jones fatally shot Everett outside of a home in the 100 block of Joyce Street in West Orange.

On Feb. 11, of this year, after a month-long trial, Jones was found guilty by an Essex County jury of murder, conspiracy to commit murder, unlawful possession of a weapon, possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose and being a convicted felon with a weapon.

Assistant Prosecutor Justin Edwab, who tried the case with Assistant Prosecutor Sam Hanna, urged the judge to impose an extended prison term on Jones because of his extensive criminal history and the heinousness of the crime.

“This defendant has had chance after chance to change his ways. He has continued to escalate the number of crimes he committed, and the level of violence associated with those crimes, until he got to murder. This sentence will hopefully give the Everett family some form of closure and give the citizens of West Orange relief that Zaki Jones can no longer commit a violent act while out in the community.” said Assistant Prosecutor Edwab.

At the time of the murder, Jones was on parole for just five months after serving a 14-year sentence for carjacking, according to Assistant Prosecutor Edwab. Jones had a total of 19 adult arrests.

Today Judge Leath imposed a life sentence on Jones. According to the law, Jones must serve at least 63 years before he is eligible for parole. Judge Leath also granted the state’s application for an extended term sentence.

Judge Leath, who presided over the trial, said what struck her was Jones’ disposition when Jones was shown a photograph of the victim during his interview with the police. Jones simply stated, “people die all the time.” She further noted that this crime was particularly heinous as Jones shot the victim multiple times, including in the scrotum, as the victim crawled under a car to escape the

violent attack.

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