



ANTHONY G. BROWN, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

# PRESS RELEASE

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Media Contacts:  
[press@oag.state.md.us](mailto:press@oag.state.md.us)  
410-576-7009

## **Attorney General Brown Announces Conviction of West Baltimore Man for First-Degree Murder of Desmond Gardner** *Jury Convicts Teen for Brutal 2023 Murder in Cherry Hill*

**BALTIMORE, MD (July 24, 2024)** — Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today announced the conviction of 19-year-old Parris Harris of Baltimore, for the January 26, 2023 first-degree murder of Desmond Gardner. Gardner, who was 27 years old, was murdered on his way to visit his young daughter during his lunch break from work.

On Friday, July 12, 2024, after a three-day jury trial in front of the Honorable Timothy J. Doory, Senior Judge of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, the jury found Harris guilty of all charges presented to them, including first-degree murder. Harris was 17 at the time of the murder.

Evidence at trial revealed that, on January 26, 2023, in broad daylight, Desmond Gardner was ambushed by three individuals, including Harris, who fired more than 20 shots at Gardner. The murder occurred in the 3400 block of Spelman Road in the Cherry Hill neighborhood of Baltimore City.

“This was a young father whose life was struck down just steps away from seeing his daughter and now she is forced to grow up without him,” explained Attorney General Anthony Brown. “I can only hope that this verdict brings some solace to her and her family. It should send a clear message that my Organized Crime Unit will prosecute violent gun offenders. We will hold you accountable for the violence, misery, fear, and pain you cause.”

Desmond Gardner was unarmed and shot in the back just as he was about to enter an apartment building where his daughter was waiting for him. At first, detectives with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) had little evidence other than a video of three masked individuals committing the brutal murder.



(Photo: Still shot from evidence video with the image of the victim redacted)

“This conviction is a true testament to our ongoing partnerships to identify those responsible for violence in our communities and hold them accountable,” said Baltimore Police Commissioner Richard Worley. “I would like to thank the detectives who worked tirelessly in solving this case and the collaborative work with the Attorney General’s Office, FBI Baltimore, Baltimore County Police and all those involved in bringing justice to the family of Desmond Gardner. The BPD remains steadfast in its dedication to working together to make our city safer.”

As the jury heard during the trial, just six days after the murder, Baltimore County Police were investigating a potentially stolen vehicle when Harris, who happened to be inside that vehicle, suddenly locked the glove compartment and fled from police. Detectives recovered a handgun from the glove compartment. Forensic testing confirmed that the shell casings recovered from the murder scene of Desmond Gardner were consistent with having been fired from that same gun.

Detectives also reviewed the contents of Harris’ cellphone, which led to the discovery of multiple photographs of Harris wearing distinctive clothing that matched one of the shooters in the video. The jury also saw a video from Harris’ phone that showed him holding the murder weapon in the days leading up to the murder.

The jury heard from multiple members of the FBI who participated in the investigation, including an expert in historical cellular record analysis who testified that Harris’ cellphone location indicated that the device was traveling from Harris’ residence in West Baltimore toward Cherry Hill shortly before the murder. The expert further testified that the device was turned off minutes prior to the murder.

“The FBI Baltimore Field Office is committed to assisting our local and state partners,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge William J. DelBagno. “Providing the FBI’s resources reaffirms our commitment to identify violent offenders and take those who threaten our community off the streets. The conviction of Parris Harris is a step toward our goal of maintaining the safety of our communities and upholding the rule of law.”

On Friday, July 12, 2024, after approximately five hours of deliberation, the jury convicted Harris on all counts, including first-degree murder, use of a firearm in the commission of a violent crime, possession of a firearm by a minor, and wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun. Sentencing is set before Judge Doory on October 23, 2024, in the Circuit Court for Baltimore City.

In making today’s announcement, Attorney General Brown thanked his Criminal Division, specifically Organized Crime Unit Chief Paul Halliday and Assistant Attorney General Pilar Rodarte who prosecuted the case. Attorney General Brown also thanked BPD Commissioner Richard Worley, FBI Baltimore Special Agent in Charge William DelBagno, Baltimore County Police Chief Robert McCullough, and the detectives and agents who worked tirelessly on this case. Attorney General Brown also thanked State’s Attorney for Baltimore City Ivan J. Bates for his office’s assistance in this case.

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