



J. HANLEY

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

PRESS RELEASE
June 20, 2023
State's Attorney J. Hanley

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley announces that on June 16, 2023, **Eric Jackson (DOB: 4/16/83)** was found guilty of four counts of First Degree Murder for the deaths of Keandra Austin and her three children following a jury trial before the Honorable Judge Maher.

On September 17, 2016 around 5AM the Rockford City Fire Department (RFD) responded to a residential structure fire in the 2800 blk of Garfield Dr., Rockford, IL. Upon arrival RFD observed the residence to be fully engulfed in fire with neighboring residences also suffering fire damage. After the fire was extinguished, RFD located the body of a child in a bedroom of the residence and notified the Rockford City Police Department (RCPD). The bodies of Keandra Austin and her three children were located inside the residence. Autopsies were completed and it was determined that Keandra had died of multiple penetrating chest injuries prior to the fire and that her children had died during the fire from asphyxia. During the course of the investigation, detectives learned that Keandra Austin was having trouble with a neighbor, Eric Jackson, and his family that resided down the street. Witnesses were interviewed including multiple family members of the defendant as well as the defendant himself. The defendant initially advised he was home from between midnight and 5:30 a.m., however the investigation revealed that not to be accurate and he advised he could have been somewhere else. A family member of the Defendant advised detectives they had seen the Defendant early that morning and he had a strong odor of gasoline and was acting nervously. Detectives also learned that the Defendant had made statements to multiple individuals that he and another person had set the fire to the residence.

First Degree Murder is a Class M Felony ordinarily punishable by 20-60 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections followed by a term of mandatory supervised release of three years. However, because the defendant in this case was convicted of murdering two or more individuals, he is to be sentenced to a term of natural life imprisonment with no term of parole.



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The Rockford City Police Department and the Rockford City Fire Arson Investigators conducted the investigation in this case. Assistant State's Attorney Kirstin Krivanec and First Assistant Ken LaRue handled the prosecution.

CONTACT PERSON:

J. Hanley, Winnebago County State's Attorney
815-319-4700