

STATE OF INDIANA )  
 ) SS:  
 COUNTY OF LAKE )  
 SUPERIOR COURT OF LAKE COUNTY  
 CRIMINAL DIVISION  
 CROWN POINT, INDIANA

STATE OF INDIANA )  
 )  
 V. )  
 )  
 DARREN DEON VANN )  
 DOB: 3/21/1971 )  
 CAUSE NUMBER:

INFORMATION

COUNT I  
[MURDER]

Shawn Ford, upon oath, says that on or about October 17, 2014, in the County of Lake, State of Indiana, Darren Deon Vann did knowingly or intentionally kill Afrika Hardy, contrary to I.C. 35-42-1-1(1) and against the peace and dignity of the State of Indiana.


COUNT II  
[MURDER IN THE PERPETRATION OF A ROBBERY]

Shawn Ford, upon oath, says that on or about October 17, 2014, in the County of Lake, State of Indiana, Darren Deon Vann did kill Afrika Hardy while committing or attempting to commit the crime of robbery, contrary to I.C. 35-42-1-1(2) and against the peace and dignity of the State of Indiana.

COUNT III  
[ROBBERY RESULTING IN SERIOUS BODILY INJURY (2)]

Shawn Ford, upon oath, says that on or about October 17, 2014, in the County of Lake, State of Indiana, Darren Deon Vann did knowingly or intentionally take a cellular phone and condoms from the person or presence of Afrika Hardy by using force or by threatening the use of force on Afrika Hardy which resulted in serious bodily injury to Afrika Hardy, contrary to I.C. 35-42-5-1(1) and against the peace and dignity of the State of Indiana.

I swear, under the penalty for perjury as specified by I.C. 35-44.1-2-1, that the foregoing is true to the best of my information and belief.

  
 SHAWN FORD  
 AFFIANT

Subscribed and sworn to before me and approved for prosecution on October 20, 2014.

BERNARD A. CARTER  
 PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

  
 DAVID J. KOWALCZYK  
 DEPUTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

WITNESSES: Shameeka Cunningham, Eduardo Ayon, Det. Sgt. Shawn Ford, Det. Adam Clark, Det. Mark Tharp,  
 Det. Capt. Ezequiel Hinojosa, Sgt. Michael Darnell, Ofc. Daniel Drudge, Det. K. Mickey, Det. T.  
 Sawyer, Ofc. C. Gootce, Sgt. J. Ritter, Custodian of Records, ChicagoBackpage.com

STATE OF INDIANA )

COUNTY OF LAKE )

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V. )

DARREN DEON VANN )

SUPERIOR COURT OF LAKE COUNTY  
CRIMINAL DIVISION  
CROWN POINT, INDIANA

) ss:

CAUSE: 45603-1410-MR-7

PROBABLE CAUSE AFFIDAVIT

Affiant swears or affirms that he/she believes and has good cause to believe that:

Affiant a detective with the Hammond police department was involved in the investigation of an incident which occurred on October 17, 2014 at the Motel 6, 3840 179<sup>th</sup> Street, Hammond, Lake County, Indiana.

On the above date at about 9:27 p.m. Detective Clark and I were dispatched to the above location and met with Officer Daniel Drudge of the Hammond police department where we also met with Sgt. Michael Darnell who told us that the body of Afrika Hardy was found in a bath tub in the bathroom at a particular motel room there. We entered the room and saw what appeared to be a broken fingernail on the floor, a light colored button from a shirt and a torn condom wrapper. The beds were moved away from the headboards to suggest that there was possibly a struggle there. We also saw a white purse, clothing and personal contents in the room. We saw the body of Afrika Hardy laying nude in the bathtub and she appeared to have a black piece of clothing covering her arms and around her neck. Red marks could be seen on her neck as if she had been strangled with something thin. Her body had droplets of water on it. Also located in the bathroom was a pillow besides the toilet which appeared to have blood on it. Sgt. Darnell said that EMS personnel from the Hammond Fire Department had responded to this location and pronounced Afrika Hardy dead at that location. The officers then directed us to Shameeka Cunningham and Eduardo Ayon and said that these persons had discovered Ms. Hardy.

I spoke with Shameeka Cunningham who I believe to be truthful and credible because she spoke of facts from within her own personal knowledge who said that Afrika Hardy was her 19 year old friend and that the two of them and another woman friend had decided to start an escort business. She said that they placed ads on backpage.com. She said that the ads were placed for Afrika Hardy using the names of "Octavia" or "Ms. Youngin". Cunningham said that they would use hotels in the Hammond and Lansing Illinois area to conduct their business. She said that she and Afrika had checked into this particular room at the Motel 6 in Hammond between 2 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. on October 17, 2014. Cunningham stayed there for about 15 to 20 minutes and then left while Hardy used the hotel room for clients. She said that prior to arriving at the hotel she and Hardy stopped at a Walgreen's to purchase some condoms. She said that Hardy was contacted by a man using the name of "Big Boy Appetite" on October 16, 2014 for an escort call and the man couldn't get a babysitter. On October 17<sup>th</sup> Cunningham said that the man called again and wanted to meet. She said that in the first hour Ms. Hardy was at the hotel and that she had a customer but he had left. She said that Hardy texted her saying that the man who contacted her the day before, referring to "Big Boy Appetite" was at the room at 5:13 p.m. Ms. Cunningham tried to call Hardy approximately five to eight times after that man arrived at the hotel. She said that Hardy went passed the normal time for such an appointment and so she texted Hardy and received a response which did not make sense. Cunningham believed that the man was sending the text messages on Hardy's phone. Cunningham then called Hardy's phone and when Hardy did not answer the phone she tried to call Eduardo Ayon. Ms Cunningham then met with Ayon and they went to the room in the Motel 6 where Hardy was at. She and Ayon found hardy's body in the bathtub and the water from the shower was running. Cunningham said that she ran away from the body and she called 911. Ayon checked Hardy for a pulse and shook her body. She said that Hardy's cell phone which had a pink cover on it was missing.

During my investigation I discovered that Detective Tharp took a statement from Eduardo Ayon regarding this incident. Ayon said that on October 17, 2014 he was contacted by Shameeka Cunningham who wanted him to drive her to the Motel 6 in Hammond to check on a friend. Cunningham told him that the friend had met a man on Backpage at Motel 6 and she was no longer answering her phone. He said that Cunningham discovered the woman in the bathtub as described above and motioned for him to come into the bathroom. Ayon saw this woman in the bathtub, later identified as Afrika Hardy, and said that Cunningham called 911. Ayon checked the woman for a pulse and shook her and then waited outside for the police with Ms. Cunningham.

During my investigation Detective Ezequiel Hinojosa obtained a search warrant to obtain the subscriber information for the cellular phone number used which Ms. Cunningham provided to the police regarding the man

who responded to the Backpage advertisement for Hardy, referring to "Big Boy Appetite". Records for this cellular phone led the detectives to a particular address in the 600 block of W. 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Gary.

I viewed video surveillance of the parking lot of the Motel 6 on October 17, 2014 regarding this incident and I observed a dark colored sports utility vehicle parked near the entrance to the above hotel room where the body of Afrika Hardy was found and saw a male black subject, later identified as Darren Deon Vann, exit that vehicle. The man entered the room and was later seen running from that room and then leaving in the same vehicle. Another camera angle showed that this vehicle was a newer model Jeep. Further investigation revealed that Regina Beard was the registered owner of a 2013 blue Jeep and that Beard lives at the address in the 600 block of W. 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Gary. During our investigation Detectives saw this vehicle at that residence and then began surveillance of this residence.

On October 18, 2014 Detectives obtained a search warrant for this residence by Hammond City Court Judge Harkin and then we executed the search warrant at that location. As a result of the execution of the search warrant Darren Deon Vann was placed under arrest and the blue Jeep was also towed and a search warrant was obtained for the vehicle.

This blue Jeep is the same vehicle registered to Regina Beard. Recovered from the Jeep was a white glove. Other items obtained during the execution of the search warrant included a key to this Jeep, an Indiana Sex Offender Registry sheet in the name of Darren Vann listing him as a sex offender through the Lake County Sheriff's Department, a grey puffy jacket and dark colored hooded sweatshirt which looked similar to the clothing worn by the same male black subject in the surveillance video from the Motel 6, a black hooded sweatshirt which contained packages of condoms which were the same brand and style as the condom wrapper found in the Motel 6 motel room described above, HTC cellular phone in a pink case similar to the description of the phone which Shameeka Cunningham said belonged to Afrika Hardy. A shirt was also collected from Darren Vann's person which was missing a button and we observed that the remaining buttons on his shirt appeared to be the same style and color as the one button found on the floor of the motel room at the Motel 6 as described above.

After advising him of his civil and constitutional rights and waiving said rights, Darren Deon Vann admitted that he responded to a Backpage advertisement and he was supposed to meet a female named "Octavia" at the Motel 6 in Hammond at the same motel room where her body was later found. He admitted that he drove to the Motel 6 in his sisters blue Jeep and that he parked it next to a black Chrysler vehicle in the parking lot. When I reviewed the video surveillance from the Motel 6 I saw that the blue Jeep did pull into the parking lot and park next to a black Chrysler vehicle as Vann described. Darren Vann then admitted that he had sex with the woman from the advertisement, referring to Afrika Hardy and that at one point the sex was getting rough and she started to fight with him. Vann said that he strangled the woman first with his hands and then with a cord before placing her body in the bath tub of the motel room. He then left the room, got back into his sisters Jeep and fled the scene.

Detective Hinojosa and I had different conversations with Darren Vann and showed him some photographs of the above items recovered as well as a photograph of Afrika Hardy and Vann confirmed that he killed Afrika Hardy by strangling her with a cord. Vann viewed photographs of a grey puffy jacket and a dark hoodie taken during the search warrant and confirmed that the clothing belonged to him and that he wore this clothing during the murder of Afrika Hardy. He viewed a photograph of the above cellular phone with a pink case and confirmed that he took this phone from the hotel room after murdering Afrika Hardy. He viewed a photograph of condom packages and confirmed that he also took them after the murder of Afrika Hardy. He viewed the photograph of the white glove recovered from inside the Jeep and he confirmed that he used white gloves during the murder of Afrika Hardy. Vann viewed a photograph of Ms. Hardy's cell phone which had a brown extension cord near it and Vann confirmed that his cord was the murder weapon used to kill Afrika Hardy.

I swear, under the penalty for perjury as specified by I.C. 35-44.1-2-1, that the foregoing is true to the best of my information and belief.

  
AFFIANT, SHAWN FORD

Subscribed and sworn to before me and approved for prosecution on October 20, 2014.

  
DAVID J. KOWALCZYK  
DEPUTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

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\*\*\* RX REPORT \*\*\*  
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RECEPTION OK

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