

# DA DISPATCH

SEPTEMBER 2023

## BREAKING NEWS

**'Each of those 4,342 kits represents a victim' | Fulton DA, APD announce new grant to tackle rape kit backlog**

The Atlanta Police Department and the Fulton County District Attorney's Office will focus on testing the thousands of kits that have been untouched for decades.



**ATLANTA — A federal grant will now help metro Atlanta investigators test more than 4,000 rape kits.**

The Fulton County District Attorney's Office and the Atlanta Police Department are tackling the backlog with a new \$2.5 million grant. The funds will initiate the testing of 4,342 sexual assault kits at the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and via private labs, according to District Attorney Fani Willis.



**S.A.K.I.**  
Sexual Assault Kit Initiative



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# SEPTEMBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4 	5	6 <b>WIND DOWN WEDNESDAY</b>	7	8 👛 PAYDAY	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22 👛 PAYDAY	23
24	25  MOVIE MATINEE	26	27	28	29	30

# OCTOBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6 👛 PAYDAY	7 LEADERSHIP MEETING
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	16	17	18	19	20 👛 PAYDAY	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30  MOVIE MATINEE					



# Juvenile COURT APPRECIATION DAY



On Friday, September 8, 2023, the Fulton County Juvenile Court celebrated its annual Employee Appreciation Day to recognize and commend the dedication and hard work of its staff. Our Juvenile Court Unit team had a wonderful time, savoring delicious food, engaging in games, sharing laughter, and receiving inspiring words from Judge Yokom and Judge Scales.

## V.W.A.P. VOLUNTEERS



Pictured are: Lucia Williams, Robert "Bobby" Jones, Misty Botu, Chandrika Derricho, Sheikeya Butts (MSW Practicum Student), Chef Ashley Keyes (C.H.O.I.C.E.S.), Leilani Townsend (MSW Practicum Student), and Nadia Rhodes

Trial Division Victim Advocates, V.W.A.P. Director Chandrika Derricho, and our dedicated MSW practicum students came together for a rewarding volunteer activity with C.H.O.I.C.E.S. (Center Helping Obesity In Children End Successfully) on September 7, 2023. Together, they served Fulton County families by providing thousands of meals for them. Was created by Chef Ashley Keyes with a goal of fighting childhood obesity and food insecurity throughout Fulton County.



# 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual SENIOR SUMMIT



Joining forces with College Park Mayor Bianca Motley Broom, the Fulton County District Attorney's Office was proud to take part in the 3rd annual Senior Summit at the International Conviction Center. Deputy District Attorney Jill Hollander and her Elder & Animal Abuse Unit, along with our dedicated Gang Unit, presented valuable insights. Our shared mission? To empower and protect our cherished elders by educating them about common scams and crimes. Together, we're making a difference!



# F.O.C.U.S. AWARDS



The 3rd Quarter F.O.C.U.S. Awards took place on Thursday, September 14th, celebrating employees who have not only excelled within their respective departments but have also made a positive impact on the county. If you wish to recommend a candidate for a F.O.C.U.S. Award, we invite you to submit your nomination for the upcoming 4th Quarter by the October 12th deadline. Congratulations to all the recipients of the 3rd Quarter F.O.C.U.S. Awards!

## **Nyome Griffin: Impact Award** (Fulton County District Attorney's Office)

Special Victims Division Legal Assistant Nyome Griffin received the Impact Award, and her everyday work is the reason. Ms. Griffin's duties include assisting attorneys in the Crimes Against Children Unit, Sexual Assault Unit, and Domestic Violence Unit. She makes sure each case is court appearance ready by ordering certifies, serving discovery, running criminal history, and more. Ms. Griffin has recently exhibited commendable initiative by embracing fresh challenges. She has effectively overseen her duties as a team member, handling a substantial caseload with skill and efficiency. Furthermore, her eagerness to take on extra responsibilities to assist her colleagues is noteworthy. Ms. Griffin's valuable contributions have significantly enhanced the operations of the Special Victims Division, especially within her immediate team.

## **Tiffany Horton-Best: Helping Hands Award** (Fulton County District Attorney's Office)

Special Victims Division Legal Assistant Tiffany Horton-Best is known for her consistent dedication and received the Helping Hands Awards. Ms. Horton-Best plays a crucial role by assisting the Assistant District Attorneys in SVD. She works to prepare legal documents such as discovery and motions, maintain case files, and trial preparation. She is someone who always goes above and beyond to assist her team. Whether it's stepping in when a teammate is absent due to illness, helping pass out school backpacks to the community, or brainstorming ideas for the upcoming coat drive or other community events, her contributions are numerous and varied.



**National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month**

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness month, a time dedicated to raising awareness regarding the risks and signs of suicide. Suicide is defined as the loss of someone’s life due to self-inflicted behavior with the intent to cause death. Suicidal ideations refer to the thoughts, ideas, or plans concerning suicide. Suicide attempt refers to self-inflicted behavior with the intention to cause death that does not result in death (National Institute of Mental Health, 2022). Suicide has a large impact on the community and is definitely a public health crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control (2023) overall deaths by suicide increased consistently in 2021 by 5% and in 2022 by 2.6%.

Although women are more likely to attempt suicide, men are 4X more likely to die as a result of suicide (Centers for Disease Control, 2023). Close to 50% of individuals who die as a result of suicide had a mental health diagnosis, but studies show up to 90% may have experienced mental health symptoms. Depression and substance use disorders are the mental health disorders most commonly associated with death by suicide (Brådvik, 2018). Suicide prevention is everyone’s role not just mental health professionals. It is very important to be attentive to recognize some of the signs and symptoms of suicide. Please see a list of some of the common indicators of suicide, suicidal ideations or suicide attempts below:

- Untreated mental illness or substance use disorder
- Prior suicide attempts
- Expressing suicidal ideations
- Hopelessness or lack of reason to live
- Researching or asking questions about ways to commit suicide
- Isolating from others or normal activities
- Increased or decreased sleeping patterns
- Reaching out to loved ones to say goodbyes
- Suddenly getting rid of all possessions
- A sudden sense of relief with no change in circumstances

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal ideations, please see list of resources below. It is important to speak to a licensed professional that can help navigate this difficult time. If you find someone that appears to have attempted suicide, please call 911 for emergency assistance. **The Employee Assistance Program** is also available 24 hours a day to all employees and immediate family members and is available to all employees and provides up to 8 free confidential sessions. You can reach the Employee Assistance Program 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 800-999-7222 or visiting [www.AnthemEAP.com](http://www.AnthemEAP.com) (password: Fulton).

**Suicide Prevention Resources**

National Suicide Crisis Lifeline, **988**  
 Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL), **1-800-715-4225**  
 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline, **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**

References  
 Brådvik, L. (2018). Suicide Risk and Mental Disorders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(9), 2028. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15092028>  
 CDC Newsroom. (2023, August 10). CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2023/s0810-US-Suicide-Deaths-2022.html>  
 National Institute of Mental Health. (2022, June). Suicide. [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov); National Institute of Mental Health. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide>  
 Suicide Prevention Month | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness. (n.d.). [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org). <https://www.nami.org/GetInvolved/Awareness-Events/Suicide-Prevention-Month>



**Chandrika Derricho**  
 Director of Victim Witness Advocates

# LAW CORNER

## How to Deal with a Testifying Witness's Pending Criminal Case

What happens when a testifying witness has pending criminal charges against them, and defense wants to inquire into their pending case?

Under Rule 608, specific instances of conduct of a witness may be inquired into through direct/cross examination of that witness to attack/support their character for truthfulness. However, extrinsic evidence is not allowed to attack/support their character for truthfulness unless it is a certified criminal conviction that is tendered into evidence in accordance with the parameters set forth under O.C.G.A. § 24-6-609, or evidence of the witness' conduct that demonstrates bias in favor of or against either party. Therefore, when it comes to probing into a witness' pending criminal case that has not resulted in a conviction at the time of their testimony, Rule 608 does permit an inquiry into that witness's character for truthfulness. "The Confrontation Clause of the Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees to the defendant the right to inquire about a witness's pending criminal charges in an effort to show that the witness has possible biases, prejudices, or ulterior motives that may influence his testimony." *Ridley v. State*, 368 Ga. App. 481 (2023) (citing *Carston v. State*, 310 Ga. 797, 800 (2021)). The Georgia Supreme Court has found that even if the witness is not testifying pursuant to a deal benefiting them in their pending criminal case, the mere existence of a pending criminal case is a relevant inquiry for the defense to pursue. *Hines v. State*, 249 Ga. 257, 260 (1982); see also *Cheley v. State*, 299 Ga. 88, 94 (2016) ([w]here a prosecution witness is facing charges but has not entered a deal with the State, "the defendant has broad scope in exposing the potential for bias in the witness's testimony"). The Court dictated that this holds true even if a witness is testifying in a case where the prosecuting agency is separate from the one that is calling said witness to testify in. *Id.* at 258. The Supreme Court in *Hines* specifically indicated their rationale for why it serves as a relevant inquiry:

*What counts is whether the witness may be shading his testimony in an effort to please the prosecution. A desire to cooperate may be formed beneath the conscious level, in a manner not apparent even to the witness, but such a subtle desire to assist the state nevertheless may cloud perception.*

Nevertheless, this inquiry is not without limitations and O.C.G.A. 24-4-403 is still a line of defense for prosecutors to protect a witness under such circumstances from an inquiry into their pending criminal case. See *Ridley*, 368 Ga. App. at 484 ([t]he Confrontation Clause does not [omitted] prohibit the imposition of any limits on cross-examination into potential bias). A trial court can "impose reasonable limits on such cross-examination based on concerns about, among other things, harassment, prejudice, confusion of the issues, the witness' safety, or interrogation that is repetitive or only marginally relevant." *State v. Vogleson*, 275 Ga. 637, 639 (2002); see also *Hood v. State*, 299 Ga. 95, 103 (2016) ("[t]he major function of Rule 403 is to exclude matter of scant or cumulative probative force, dragged in by the heels for the sake of its prejudicial effect."). While it is in the trial courts discretion, it's always best to file a motion in limine to preclude the inquiry by arguing that its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of undue prejudice, confusion of the issues, and its purpose would only be to mislead the jury under the balancing test laid out in Rule 403.



Gautam Rao  
Deputy District Attorney, Training



# FULTON DA's S.A.K.I. UNIT

TEAMS UP WITH THE ATLANTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

A federal grant will now help metro Atlanta investigators test more than 4,000 rape kits. The Fulton County District Attorney's Office and the Atlanta Police Department are tackling the backlog with a new \$2.5 million grant. The funds will initiate the testing of 4,342 sexual assault kits at the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and via private labs, according to District Attorney Fani Willis. A majority of the kits' samples were taken in the 80s and 90s - meaning decades have passed with no movement in thousands of cases, Willis stressed. "It's a wrong we're really historically correcting," she said, referencing a backlog that stems from 2016.

According to a news release, the grant will loop in two APD detectives into the DA's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (S.A.K.I.) team - which is dedicated to getting through the backlog of kits at Grady Hospital. The addition of the detectives doubles SAKI's workforce. "We are only able to do S.A.K.I. because of the federal government," Willis said, explaining that the funding helps pay to seek private testing of the kits, instead of just relying on the GBI lab.







Deputy District Attorney Julianna Peterson oversees the S.A.K.I. Unit and broke the initiative down by the numbers. Peterson said the team has already sent 300 kits of the 4,342 for testing. Specifically, 3,558 belong to APD. She's hopeful that arrests can be made in cases as 954 have leads that can paint DNA profiles. For perspective, she said, there are 78 active investigations from the initial discovery of the Grady backlog. The team is already investigating 15 forensic matches, which are 15 cases where there is a suspect connected to several cases but no identity.

"Having APD join us means that we'll be able to tackle those cases which take a substantial amount of time," Peterson said. Though it's a major task at hand, Peterson and Willis said they are dedicated to seeking justice. "We should never focus on a number of 'oh, 4,000 rape kits,' - no. Those are 4,000 horrible days, horrible nights, horrible victimizations, and so this work is very, very important," Willis said. By working on the backlog, police might be able to find suspects believed to be tied to other crimes. "As we test these rape kits, time, after time, after time, we find serial rapists who have victimized not one, but multiple victims," Willis said. "And we also find lives of crime," explaining that often people are tied to other cases beyond sexual assault.

*Nunez, Gabriella. "Rape Kit Backlog in Atlanta: 2,700 Cases." 11Alive, 14 September 2023, <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/rape-kit-backlog-atlanta/85-11a84e4a-ba42-499f-b4ab-a53144bee0e7>*



# SHOUT -OUTS



Join us in celebrating the incredible achievement of **Lt. Raeisha Oliphant** as she officially becomes a member of the local FBI Task Force, deputized by the esteemed United States Marshal for the Northern District of Georgia, the Honorable Thomas E. Brown.

# APPEALS UNIT

Between September 05 and September 12, the Appeals Unit successfully defended the convictions in the following cases. Put another way, we had seven appellate victories over the course of just six business days. The appellate attorney responsible for each is named in bold.



**Kevin Armstrong**

*Deputy District Attorney*

Judge Schwall denied Dominic Jones's motion for new trial in a hijacking and armed robbery case.



**Jayna Easton**

*Chief Sr. Assistant District Attorney*

Judge Dunaway denied Denarius Harris's motion for new trial in a murder case.



**Aslean Eaglin**

*Sr. Assistant District Attorney*

The Court of Appeals affirmed Santon Smith's gang and firearms convictions. Judge Farmer denied Demetrius Thompson's motion for new trial in a child molestation case.



**Burke Doherty**

*Sr. Assistant District Attorney*

The Supreme Court affirmed Diontye Scott's murder conviction.



**Elaine Thompson**

*Assistant District Attorney*

Judge Adams denied Brian Peterman's motion for new trial in a child rape case.



## PRE-INDICTMENT TEAM



**CHARA** DENNIS

For those unaware, one of the items we keep track of is total number of unindicted cases and total number of unindicted defendants. As I have now hit over 12 months in my current position, I am able to compare the exact numbers of where we were now versus the same time last year. Today, I compared the number of unindicted cases and unindicted defendants versus the same time last year and the decline is tremendous:

**September 2022:**

106 cases, 146 defendants with open cases dating back to 2016

**September 2023:**

78 cases, 98 defendants with open cases dating back to 2021

That is a 26.4% decline in total cases, 32.8% decline in unindicted cases and we are closing in on having no case before 2022 versus having cases 5 years old like we did this time last year. What is even more impressive about this feat is that APD and Sandy Springs are taking record number of warrants, meaning we are reducing the unindicted cases despite getting significantly more unindicted cases coming in than in the past.

The credit for this goes to our pre-indictment team. Their hard work here means that victims get justice quicker and that we can get resolutions for defendants faster with a stronger likelihood of having good contact info for trials. When you see Chara or Jazmin, thank them for the hard work they have done in getting us to where we are and where we are going.



**JAZMIN** DILLIGARD

Christopher Sperry  
Deputy District Attorney  
Gang Unit

## CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN



**LAUREN** McAULEY

Greetings CAC Team and Deputy McAuley:

The office's conviction rate is now at a solid 93%. CAC has played a huge part in that level of success. Deputy DA McAuley, thank you for loving these children like they're your own and making sure evil people pay for the harm they do to innocent children.

Yours in Service,  
Fani T. Willis  
District Attorney  
Atlanta Judicial Circuit



# NEW HIRES



**Danielle Hercules**

*Legal Assistant  
Trial Division*



**Duon Dorsett**

*Investigator  
Case Intake Division*



**Michael Webb**

*Senior Assistant  
District Attorney  
Non-Complex | Trial Division*



**Kellie Fields**

*Senior Assistant  
District Attorney  
Non-Complex | Trial Division*



**Kudonna Porter**

*Legal Assistant  
Case Intake Division*



**Michelle Raines**

*Community Resource Specialist  
Conviction Integrity | Special Victims Division*



**Tamika Gibson**

*Chief Senior  
Assistant District Attorney  
Appeals Unit | Major Crimes Division*



**Lee Williams**

*Chief Senior  
Assistant District Attorney  
Case Intake Division*



**Melissa Nelson**

*Assistant District Attorney  
Case Intake Division*



**Consuela Boyer**

*Graphic Designer  
Operations Division*

*Welcoming New Faces to the FCDAO! Join us in extending a warm welcome to our exceptional new staff members as they embark on their journey at the Fulton County District Attorney's Office.*

# FEATU

## JACQUELYNN JACKSON

Born and raised in Rancho Cucamonga, California, Jacquelynn Jackson pursued her college education in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, earning a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Stillman College after high school. With a background in property management spanning 6.5 years, she decided it was time for a career change. A proud mother to an intelligent and bright 7-year-old boy actively involved in football and track year-round, she finds herself busy and engaged in his activities. Despite a dislike for bugs, Jacquelynn enjoys hiking and spending time outdoors. She cherishes spending quality time with her family and hosting Sunday dinners as way for her family to start each week positively. Her favorite cuisine is Mexican food!



## DANIELLE BURNETTE

Danielle "Dani" Burnette is a true Georgia peach, hailing from the three-stoplight town of McRae, where she was raised on a cattle farm. She is a Double Dawg, having received her bachelors and law degrees from the University of Georgia. While in undergrad, Danielle played clarinet in the Redcoat Marching Band and was a member of the Zeta Psi Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. In law school, she was a published contributor of the Georgia Journal of International & Comparative Law and served on the school's mock trial team.

Danielle knew from a young age that she wanted to be prosecutor, and as both a college student and a law student, she interned at the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the northern and southern districts of Georgia. After law school, Danielle was a commercial litigator, specializing in contract disputes and landlord-tenant issues before joining the prestigious FCDA.

In her free time, Danielle enjoys reading, traveling, studying fashion trends, and playing with her dog, Azul. She is a mixologist, with experience creating custom cocktails for party guests and friends. She aspires to learn the art of distilling her own spirits and liqueurs and hopes to one day own her own distillery.





# RED 44

## JANUARY TOWLES



January Towles was born in Alabama and raised in Florida, and later moved to Atlanta during high school, graduating with honors from Banneker High School. She received her Bachelor's of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Georgia State University, and is presently pursuing a Master's degree in Business. She has been dedicated to working with juvenile offenders and youth programs since 2016. Prior to joining the DA's Office, her professional journey included roles as a Program Director for a non-profit, a Juvenile Correctional Officer, and an Intervention Specialist for DJJ, specializing in high-risk juvenile offenders and gang members while developing program curriculums. Currently serving as the Juvenile Grants & Programs Director, she oversees grants for juvenile programs and services.

In her free time, she loves mommy-daughter dates with her daughter, binges on true crime shows and podcasts, enjoys shopping, traveling, and spending quality time with friends.

## MARSHAL HODGE



Marshal Hodge was born in Louisiana. She attended Grambling State University, then Rutgers Law School. She began her legal career in Manhattan as an attorney in the business and legal affairs department for a Sony affiliate record label, Entertainment Records. Entertainment was formed by Lance "Un" Rivera and "the Notorious BIG". She worked with recording artists such as Lil' Kim, Cam'ron and Charlie Baltimore. Marshal moved to Atlanta in 1999. When not working, she is a Sommelier in training. After completing the four levels of training and becoming a Master Sommelier, she plans on spending her retirement traveling to vineyards around the world.

# CONVICTIONAlert!

## **State v. Floyd Cloud**

In the case of State v. Floyd Cloud, the Defendant was found guilty of six counts including Aggravated Assault, Possession of a Knife During a Felony, and Cruelty to Children in the Third Degree. Judge Paige Whitaker sentenced the Defendant to 20 years, serve 13, balance probated. The Defendant is an A and C Recidivist.



Senior Assistant  
District Attorney  
Jana Dixon



Senior Assistant  
District Attorney  
Betsy Weintraub



Sr. Investigator  
J.P. Miller



Sr. Investigator  
William  
Hutchinson



Victim Advocate  
Cherrilie Tonge



Legal Assistant  
Gabrielle Waterman

## **State v. Ashley Parker**

In the case of State v. Ashley Parker, the Defendant was found guilty of six counts including Murder, Felony Murder, Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon, Possession of Firearm During Felony, and Possession of Firearm by Convicted Felon through a bench trial. Judge Rachelle Carnesale sentenced the Defendant to life with the possibility of parole.



Chief Senior  
Assistant District  
Attorney  
Jeffrey Lee



Senior Assistant  
District Attorney  
Danielle Russell



Sr. Investigator  
Darrion Eshmon



Victim Advocate  
Maya Wilburn



Legal Assistant  
Ja'Trenton Gillyard

## **State v. Chad Doughty**

In the case of State v. Chad Doughty, the Defendant was found guilty of six counts including Aggravated Child Molestation, Incest, and Child Molestation. Judge David Emerson sentenced the Defendant to three consecutive life sentences plus 30 years.



Deputy  
District Attorney  
Lauren McAuley



Senior Assistant  
District Attorney  
Robert Shapiro



Assitant Chief  
Investigator  
Temperance  
Stoddard



Victim Advocate  
Jasmyn Drummond



Victim Advocate  
Christen Clarke



Legal Assistant  
Nyome Griffin



**State v. Paul Jones**

In the case of State v. Paul Jones, the Defendant was found guilty of four counts including Aggravated Child Molestation and Child Molestation. Judge Rachelle Carnesale sentenced the Defendant to life plus 59 years.



Senior Assistant District Attorney Travis Thomas



Senior Assistant District Attorney Caitlin McGillicuddy



Sr. Investigator Bryony Harris



Victim Advocate Christen Clarke



Chief Legal Assistant Patrice Stewart



Legal Assistant Nikayla Sirmons



Legal Assistant Tiffany Horton

**State v. Thaddeus Roberts**

In the case of State v. Thaddeus Roberts, the Defendant was found guilty of Aggravated Assault Strangulation and Battery Family Violence. Judge Rachel Krause sentenced the Defendant to 10 years, 8 years balance probated to serve following the trial.



Senior Assistant District Attorney Donita Morris



Senior Assistant District Attorney Kassie Hall



Sr. Investigator Ranetta Cruse



Victim Advocate Nicole Santos



Legal Assistant Bryant Brinson

**State v. Edouard Kamdem**

In the case of State v. Edouard Kamdem, the Defendant was found guilty of all counts including Criminal Attempt to Commit Rape, Improper Sexual Contact by an Employee, and Abuse of an Elder Person. Judge Robert McBurney sentenced the Defendant to 25 years.



Senior Assistant District Attorney Kassie Hall



Senior Assistant District Attorney Precious Marsh



Assistant Chief Investigator Paula Duprey



Victim Advocate LaTeeka Montgomery



Legal Assistant Cassie Lundy

**State v. Fredy Alvarez-Perez**

In the case of State v. Fredy Alvarez-Perez, the Defendant was found guilty of all counts including Rape, Aggravated Child Molestation, and Child Molestation. Judge Thomas Cox sentenced the Defendant to four life sentences plus 59 years.



Assistant District Attorney Nalda "Kay" Charles



Assistant District Attorney Caitlin Adcock



Sr. Investigator Bryony Harris



Victim Advocate Christen Clarke



Legal Assistant Nyome Griffin

# AWARDS



## Saluting Excellence

Executive District Attorney Daysha Young and Chief Deputy District Attorney RuShondra Davenport were honored at the 2023 When Sisters Unite Conference, themed “The Deployment,” which occurred in Atlanta from September 29th through October 1st. Congratulations to our remarkable leaders for their well-deserved recognition at this inspiring event recognizing leaders who were “called to duty.” This yearly event honors trailblazing women who have achieved great success in their life while impacting other lives around the world.



## Join us in celebrating Chief Senior Assistant District Attorney Aimee Maxwell, recipient of the 2023 Impact Award from the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV!)

Aimee’s dedication to ending domestic violence is truly commendable. As a board member, volunteer for the Justice for Incarcerated Survivor’s program, and a key partner in the Fulton County District Attorney’s Office Conviction Integrity Unit’s collaboration with GCADV on a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant, she has consistently shown exemplary efforts in championing positive local and statewide change. Her work has not only supported survivors but also contributed to vital social and systems change in the fight against domestic violence.



*"I came across the details of the CourtWatch initiative when reading one of the local online news publications and felt that with the background and experience in court work I have from my life in the UK then this was something that I would both enjoy doing and that I could offer help, advice and an opinion from a different perspective. I believe in offering something back to the community in which you live particularly if you have a skill that can be put to good use. I have really enjoyed being part of the CourtWatch team of volunteers, and long may it last." – Graham Jagger*

# From magistrate in the UK to a 'court watcher' in United States



Graham Jagger. Picture: Graham Jagger

Graham Jagger started his career in local government in 1972 working for the then Skipton Rural District Council. He has been using his experience as a magistrate in the UK to get involved in the court system in Georgia, USA, where he now lives. Here is his "Letter from America"

FOR 22 years I was a magistrate sitting in courts in Lancashire, and having relocated to Atlanta, I got an opportunity to get involved with the judicial system by way of watching and reporting on cases involving repeat offenders in Fulton County Superior Court – the main court in downtown Atlanta.

The Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis and the Police Federation set up an initiative which allows certain selected people to participate in the court system and provide input to the courts about the how cases are handled and that the outcomes are consistent with the values of the community.

Cases can be "watched" either in person or in some instances by Zoom, or on a Judge's YouTube channel. Yes, judges here have their own YouTube channels.

Based upon my own experience in UK courts, courts here are far more technologically advanced with multiple cameras operating and TV screens showing all parties involved. They are of course, also open to the public.

I've been to the court several times but watched more using Zoom or YouTube. As a "court watcher", I get a full list of all cases and details of the repeat offenders whose cases I'm asked to observe and comment on.

Afterwards, I complete a brief report on the outcome and submit it back to the district attorney's staff. Feedback is then given to the assistant district attorneys, the police, and the judges.

I've had to learn many new terms.

"Arraignment" is a hearing in which the defendant pleads guilty or not guilty to the crime with which they have been charged. An "indictment" is the formal charge issued by a grand jury stating there is enough evidence that the defendant committed the crime to justify having a trial. This is a stage which doesn't take place in the UK. If you've been keeping up with what has been happening here as regards the former President Donald Trump then it's more than likely you've heard both these terms several times.

So, I'd been doing this for just over a year and was invited to an event to be held in Atlanta City Hall to celebrate the work that I'd been doing.

Speeches were given by the mayor of Atlanta Andre Dickens, the Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis and Atlanta Police Chief Darin Shierbaum and Police Federation chairman Senator David Wilkerson.

I was then presented with my Certificate of Appreciation by the DA and a photograph was taken. After the formalities I had the chance to



Graham Jagger and his Courtwatch colleagues, including District Attorney Fani Willis. Picture: Graham Jagger

speak with DA Fani Willis, and knowing that I'd been a magistrate back in the UK she has asked if I would do some work with her assistant DA's on trial preparation and presentation which I'm looking forward to do once things have settled down after events involving Donald Trump are over.

I also had a good conversation with Judge Robert McBurney who oversaw the work of the Special Purposes Grand Jury and the normal Grand Jury connected with the election interference investigation by the former president.

He was interested in the comparisons between the judicial system and processes here in the US and those in the UK. The one thing for sure is that notwithstanding the difference in size of the two countries, there are many more courts here in the US and in Georgia compared to the UK.

Every county, city, town here has their own courts and elected judges, although some

judges are political appointments also. Even the district attorney is a position that's subject to being voted on by the public.

For the most part, sentences are much more severe than in the UK and people can be on probation for many years and with very strict terms and conditions to abide by. Crimes are categorised into a "misdemeanor" – a crime punishable by one year of imprisonment or less or a "felony" which is a more serious crime punishable by at least one year in jail. This is very similar to how things are in the UK.

But one thing that is very different here to in the UK is gun crime. It's a daily occurrence that someone is shot and killed – not just in the US but in just about every city, town, county or wherever.

There have been more "mass shootings" here, that is where four or more people have been shot in one incident, than there have been days of the year so far.

Gun violence is commonplace and covered

each morning on local TV here. I used to be alarmed by what I was hearing, but no more. You eventually just get adjusted to it.

Gun owners, of which there's a huge proportion in this country, quote the Second Amendment of the US Constitution giving them the right to bear arms and fiercely defend that. State by state different restrictions on gun ownership vary. But they are everywhere other than anywhere near my house or that of my daughter. When I mention that gun ownership in the UK virtually doesn't exist, people look at me blankly and can't believe it. There's no point arguing with them on this issue.

So, it's been very rewarding personally for me to get involved with the court process here and I've met and talked with many high-profile people here that others would never be likely to meet. I've learnt a lot about the law here and am trying to put what I knew from my days as a magistrate in the UK into some good use here.

**Article written by our very own CourtWatch volunteer, Graham Jagger, that was published in his hometown in the United Kingdom. He has been a great resource and volunteer with our CourtWatch program. – Lisa Holland, CourtWatch Project Manager**





## VICTIM ADVOCATE PARTNERS OF FULTON COUNTY

Commencing on Tuesday, October 3rd, at the Roswell Police Department, an inspiring assembly of compassionate professionals hailing from different corners of Fulton County united. They gathered under the banner of “Victim Advocate Partners of Fulton County,” a name that epitomizes their shared commitment to aiding those impacted by crime. The catalyst behind this collaboration was Robyn Kenner, the newly appointed Victim Advocate for the Roswell Police Department, who sought guidance from Lisa Holland, the North Fulton Community Resource Specialist at the Fulton County District Attorney’s Office.

Adding a vital dimension to this gathering were Dilma Dos Reis and Ilona Rolack, unwavering Deputy Victim Witness Advocates from the Fulton County District Attorney’s Office. Their participation highlighted the significance of networking as their combined knowledge illuminated the path to assisting victims. With several North Fulton police agencies now having their own advocates, this partnership possesses the potential to significantly alleviate their caseloads, thereby fostering a stronger and more supportive relationship with the DA’s office.

Victim Advocates from the Sandy Springs Police Department and the Fulton County Solicitor’s Office were also in attendance, contributing to the collective dedication to serving our community.

## ERADICT HATE GLOBAL SUMMIT

Legal Assistant SaQuez King and Hate Crimes Victim Witness Advocate Caderrius Armstrong attended the 3rd annual Eradicate Hate Global Summit in Pittsburgh, PA, engaging in a multidisciplinary forum committed to eliminating all forms of hate-driven violence. The Eradicate Hate Global Summit was formed as a response to the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh- the largest anti-Semitic assault in U.S. history where a gunman opened fire, killing 11 worshippers and wounding multiple others.



The annual conference of the Summit transcends barriers to unite anti-hate experts worldwide, spanning diverse fields and sectors. Participants include representatives from public policy organizations, tech and platform companies, federal, state, and local government and law enforcement, military and veterans, judges and lawyers, healthcare professionals, educators and students, academic researchers, data scientists, journalists, filmmakers, and even former members of hate groups. Motivated by the personal experiences shared by survivors and victims’ families during the conference, these experts find inspiration to collaborate and devise innovative solutions for preventing hate-motivated violence.





## **FULTON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE PARTNERS WITH CITY OF ROSWELL**



On September 22, DA Fani Willis and Deputy District Attorney Earnelle Winfrey stood alongside our partners in the City of Roswell to announce a series of arrests related to an extensive human trafficking network operating within several metro Atlanta massage parlors. Numerous undercover operations executed by the Roswell Police Department's Special Investigations Section revealed a far-reaching human trafficking and prostitution network encompassing at least six spa locations.

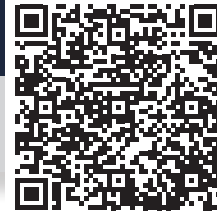


Roswell Mayor Kurt Wilson, the Roswell City Council, and Roswell Police Chief James Conroy have provided invaluable leadership in holding those responsible for these heinous acts accountable. Additionally, advocates and social service organizations are working to provide essential victim services, ensuring that survivors have secure housing and receive comprehensive support as they recover from the trauma they have endured.

# NEWS CORNER

**Man accused of machete attack  
sentenced to 20 years**

AFN | 09/14/2023



**Fulton DA, APD announce new  
grant to tackle rape kit backlog**

11 ALIVE | 09/14/2023



**Roswell police arrest 3 connected to  
massage parlor human trafficking  
ring**

AFN | 09/22/2023



**Fulton County man sentenced to  
life behind bars for nearly decade-  
long child molestation case**

AFN | 09/28/2023

