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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
21-01099-CF  
SECTION M

STATE OF FLORIDA,  
Plaintiff,  
vs.  
CORNELIUS TREVON WHITFIELD  
Person ID: 1566510,  
  
Defendant.

\_\_\_\_\_ /

DEPOSITION OF: FRANCES ELENA JOHNSON  
  
DATE: February 21, 2023  
  
TIME: 10:33 a.m. to 10:56 a.m.  
  
PLACE: County Justice Center  
14250 49th Street North  
Room 1100  
Clearwater, Florida  
  
PURSUANT TO: Notice by counsel for  
Defendant for purposes of  
discovery, use at trial  
or such other purposes  
as are permitted under  
the Florida Rules  
of Civil Procedure  
  
BEFORE: Nathan F. Perkins, RDR  
Notary Public, State of  
Florida at Large  
  
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APPEARANCES:

THEODORA TAKTIKOS-DANZIG, ESQUIRE  
THOMAS KOSKINAS, ESQUIRE  
County Justice Center  
14250 49th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida 33762  
Attorneys for Plaintiff

JESSICA MANUELE, ESQUIRE  
Public Defender, Sixth Judicial Circuit  
County Justice Center  
14250 49th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida 33762  
Attorney for Defendant

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E X H I B I T S

(None marked)

1                   FRANCES ELENA JOHNSON,  
2     the witness herein, being first duly sworn on oath, was  
3     examined and deposed as follows:

4                   DIRECT EXAMINATION

5     BY MS. MANUELE:

6           Q.     Could you please state your name and  
7     occupation for the record?

8           A.     Yes. Frances Elena Johnson, and I work for  
9     the St. Petersburg Police Department.

10          Q.     How long have you been with the St. Pete PD?

11          A.     About six years.

12          Q.     Any prior law enforcement experience?

13          A.     No, ma'am.

14          Q.     And what unit are you currently assigned to?

15          A.     I'm currently in the major crimes unit.

16          Q.     And going back to February of 2021, how were  
17     you so assigned?

18          A.     I was also in the major crime unit then.

19          Q.     Okay. We are here because you've been listed  
20     as a witness in the State of Florida versus Cornelius  
21     Whitfield regarding a homicide and attempted homicide  
22     that occurred on or February 1st, February 2nd of 2021.  
23     Are you familiar generally with the circumstances?

24          A.     Yes, ma'am.

25          Q.     Okay. And did you write a supplemental report

1 detailing your involvement?

2 A. Yes, ma'am, I did.

3 Q. Do you have that report with you?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Have you had an opportunity to review it?

6 A. Yes, ma'am.

7 Q. Was there anything in that report that you  
8 found to be inaccurate or that you would like to change?

9 A. Yes. So I spelled one of the victims' last  
10 names wrong in the second report, the 6023 one. It  
11 should have been Antonio Brown, and I put Green. So  
12 anything that should say Green should say Green.

13 Q. And I don't even have that one. How many  
14 supplements did you do on 6023?

15 A. I did two. The second one was just like a  
16 date typo. So not really --

17 Q. Let me see if I can pull that one up.

18 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: That's 21-6023?

19 THE WITNESS: Yes, ma'am.

20 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: Okay.

21 THE WITNESS: Would it be easier if you wanted  
22 to review this one?

23 (A document was shown to counsel)

24 BY MS. MANUELE:

25 Q. Okay. Thanks. So we have one supplement

1 regarding the Barnes and Green case, and then two  
2 supplements regarding the --

3 A. The house Emerson?

4 Q. Yes, the Emerson.

5 A. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

6 Q. And you have all three of those with you  
7 today?

8 A. Yes, ma'am.

9 Q. And then other than that typo, anything else?

10 A. No, ma'am.

11 Q. Did you review any other reports or  
12 supplements prior to today?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. Tell me how you became involved on  
15 February 2nd of 2021?

16 A. The one at the apartment complex?

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. Okay. Yes. So that one I was tasked with  
19 Detective Gaddis, Marissa Gaddis with canvassing. So  
20 her and I went door-to-door looking for any video or  
21 potential witnesses involved in the case. And her  
22 report will document the full canvass.

23 Q. Okay. And about what time would this have  
24 been? Like, are we talking about, like, at midnight or  
25 some hours later on the 2nd?

1           A.    No, it was on the 2nd.  It was in the morning  
2 on the 2nd, like during daylight.  Like, I wasn't called  
3 in.

4           Q.    Okay.  Yeah.  So as far as that night, it's  
5 like right around midnight, within a couple minutes  
6 after midnight that the initial call goes out.

7           A.    I don't know.  I wasn't there for that event.

8           Q.    As far as within those first few hours between  
9 midnight and like, let's say, 5:00 a.m., you would not  
10 have been on scene, right?

11          A.    That's correct, I would not have been there.

12          Q.    Gotcha.  And did you ever respond to the  
13 hospital to have any contact with Mr. Green?

14          A.    No, ma'am.

15          Q.    Okay.  When Gaddis has in her report about  
16 10:00 a.m., does that sound about right when you guys  
17 started the canvass?

18          A.    Yes, ma'am.

19          Q.    Okay.  The video that you guys pulled from  
20 Emerald Pointe, was there any video that showed the  
21 actual building that the homicide occurred at?

22          A.    I don't believe so.  I believe the only video  
23 was, like, the exterior, like, the entrances, coming and  
24 going type of thing.

25          Q.    Okay.

1           A.    I don't believe that there was any video right  
2 there.  But again, her report would have all that.

3           Q.    Well, it says, Nothing stuck out to us on the  
4 video at that time.

5           A.    Right.

6           Q.    But it didn't really tell us where the video  
7 is looking, so I don't know what should or should not  
8 stick out.

9           A.    Right.  I remember looking at entrance and  
10 exit points.

11          Q.    You remember seeing entrance and exit points?

12          A.    Yeah.

13          Q.    Okay.  Did you guys -- was there any, like,  
14 making note of any of the vehicles coming and going?

15          A.    We were basically looking for -- from what I  
16 remember, I was looking for, like, anything that would  
17 look out of the normal.  So there was a lot of cars  
18 coming and going at that time, but it would have been,  
19 like, anything like going fast or whatever like that.  
20 But we didn't note anything of importance at the time, I  
21 should say.  Anything that was pertinent.  We didn't see  
22 anything that stuck out.

23          Q.    Did you ever speak to Deronrick Green?

24          A.    No.

25          Q.    Okay.  As far as any information he had

1 provided about what time he left the apartment and who  
2 was there when he left, did you guys look for any  
3 vehicles to confirm whether that was accurate or not?

4 A. Who is Deronrick Green.

5 Q. Rodney's brother?

6 A. I don't think I spoke with him. I don't  
7 believe so. I don't -- I don't remember being asked to  
8 do that. So I had minimal involvement, so I don't  
9 really know too many names. I apologize for that.

10 Q. Oh, that's okay. So looking at Gaddis's  
11 supplemental report, she has, like, "103 heard yelling  
12 at 11:00 p.m."

13 A. Uh-huh (Affirmative response).

14 Q. How do I know who you guys spoke to at Unit  
15 103?

16 A. His name should have been captioned in the  
17 report if she was willing -- or if he or she was willing  
18 to give the name. But if they don't give us the names,  
19 because sometimes they don't want to be involved, and  
20 they won't give us their name. They will just say what  
21 they heard and leave it at that.

22 Q. Is this captured on like body-worn camera  
23 footage?

24 A. No ma'am. We don't wear body cameras.

25 Q. So they are -- would be a witness -- I mean,



1 okay. So if the person doesn't want to give their name  
2 but they heard yelling in relation to about the time a  
3 homicide was taking place, I mean, could I get like a  
4 male or female or age range? Like, how do I piece  
5 together now who you guys talked to at that unit?

6 A. You'll have to talk to Detective Gaddis. I  
7 don't know why she didn't put that in there. That's her  
8 report. I'm not going to attest to her report. Sorry.

9 Q. You agree it's not incredibly helpful?

10 A. I would agree with that, yes.

11 Q. On Unit 105, and if your answer is the same, I  
12 understand, but the timing was off. Do you know what  
13 that -- what she is referencing there? Do you recall  
14 what timing was off?

15 A. No, I don't.

16 Q. Okay. Or who would have made that, provided  
17 that information?

18 A. Yeah. I have no idea.

19 Q. Were you with Detective Gaddis when she goes  
20 out to the traffic stop on February 3rd?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. The complex manager, Jessica Tierney,  
23 that you spoke with.

24 A. Yes, ma'am.

25 Q. She was going to upload some videos to

1 evidence.com. Did you -- like, did you guys ask for  
2 certain videos for a certain time frame or all videos  
3 for a certain time frame? Or what was the request of  
4 what she was going to provide you all?

5 A. So the cameras that would have captured, like,  
6 the entrances and exits, we requested a certain time  
7 frame.

8 Q. Do you remember what time that was?

9 A. I don't, but I believe the time would have  
10 been a few hours -- like an hour beforehand to an hour  
11 after, I believe. But that also would have been  
12 narrowed later on in the investigation. I'm not sure.

13 Q. Fair to say it's best, I guess, to, like, over  
14 ^ and then narrow what's important later?

15 A. Yes, ma'am.

16 Q. When you guys -- so you and Gaddis then go  
17 back on February 5th; is that correct?

18 A. Yes, ma'am.

19 Q. Do you make contact with Jessica Tierney then  
20 also?

21 A. I don't remember if we made contact with her.  
22 I remember a maintenance man kind of showing us where  
23 the video, like, box is to download onto the thumb  
24 drive, because we had to download it ourselves.

25 Q. Okay. So as far as what video we have from

1 the apartment complex, would that essentially be  
2 whatever you and Detective Gaddis placed on the thumb  
3 drive?

4 A. Yes, ma'am.

5 Q. Okay. Am I -- I guess does she have like  
6 videos isolated and said "I just can't upload them," or  
7 did she say, "Here is the whole video system. I can  
8 figure it out. You guys take what you want"?

9 A. She said "Here is the whole video system." I  
10 don't recall if the video may have been too big to  
11 upload. I think that might have been an issue.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So it was just easier to put it on a thumb  
14 drive.

15 Q. Okay. And then the video from Laser Center --  
16 we are talking about two different videos, right? There  
17 is a thumb drive from the apartment and then an  
18 additional video from Laser Center; is that right?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. Do you know what time frame was  
21 collected from Laser Center?

22 A. I don't. It would have been similar to the  
23 time frame from Emerald Pointe, though.

24 Q. Okay. Were you ever asked to, like, go back  
25 and review the video to, I guess, see if you can see any

1 specific vehicles or people?

2 A. No. I was not asked to do that.

3 Q. Okay. Do you have any involvement in this  
4 investigation after 2/5, before -- in between 2/5 and  
5 2/16 of '21?

6 A. No, ma'am.

7 Q. Okay. As far as you know, have you ever had  
8 any contact with Cornelius Whitfield?

9 A. No, ma'am.

10 Q. Okay. And on February 16th, what is your  
11 involvement on that date?

12 A. And that's the one on Emerson?

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. So that one I was tasked about getting the  
15 residential search warrant and assisting with the search  
16 at the house.

17 Q. Were you on scene at all before Mr. Whitfield  
18 was arrested?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. Were you at all responsible for making  
21 the calls on, like, taking the tank to the house or  
22 anything like that?

23 A. Oh, God no.

24 Q. Did you write the search warrant?

25 A. Yes, ma'am.

1 Q. Okay. And did you do the search warrant just  
2 for the residence, or did you author any other search  
3 warrants?

4 A. Just for the residence.

5 Q. Okay. How did you get tasked with that?

6 A. They split up tasks when anything big comes  
7 out, just to make life easy.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And I just kind of happened to be available,  
10 and they are, like, "Hey, go do this," and I said okay.

11 Q. So did you talk to -- like who did you get  
12 information from in order to draft it?

13 A. A lot of the information was from 911, like,  
14 notes and calls. Like, from the call notes. I'm sorry.

15 Q. Gotcha.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Then during the search of that residence, was  
18 that video recorded?

19 A. The search itself?

20 Q. Uh-huh (Affirmative response).

21 A. No, ma'am.

22 Q. Okay. Was there video of the scene before the  
23 search started?

24 A. Yes, ma'am.

25 Q. Okay. Was it St. Pete or PCO Forensics or a

1 combination?

2 A. It was St. Pete.

3 Q. Okay. Were you responsible for filling out,  
4 like, the search warrant return?

5 A. Yes, ma'am.

6 Q. Do you happen to have a copy with you?

7 A. Not of the return, no, ma'am. I returned that  
8 to the clerk of the court.

9 Q. And do you know what time you would have been  
10 executing this search warrant?

11 A. So I began reading it at 20:58 hours. So  
12 right after I finished reading is when we would have  
13 begun the execution.

14 Q. And did you turn in the return on that one?

15 A. Yes, ma'am. On 2/19 of 2021.

16 Q. I don't have one on that. 2/19 of '21?

17 A. Yes, ma'am.

18 MS. MANUELE: Okay. Do you have a copy with  
19 you or no?

20 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: No. It would be  
21 upstairs in a big box.

22 MS. MANUELE: All right.

23 BY MS. MANUELE:

24 Q. On the off chance I have any questions about  
25 that, I might ask you to come back in to ask a couple

1 questions about that, if there's anything I see on that.

2 A. No problem.

3 Q. Do you remember any --

4 You wouldn't know. Or do you know? Do you  
5 remember anything specifically that stuck out on the  
6 warrant return there?

7 A. No.

8 Q. After executing that warrant, were you asked  
9 to do any additional follow-up on any items that were  
10 recovered?

11 A. What do you mean?

12 Q. Like, I guess, were you asked to submit any  
13 items for additional testing or submit any items for  
14 comparison purposes or --

15 A. No, nothing like that. No.

16 Q. Okay. Would forensics have been on scene,  
17 like, while you guys were searching?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. As far as you know, had you had any  
20 contact with Darren Barnes before?

21 A. No, ma'am.

22 Q. Had you had any contact with Rodney or  
23 Deronrick Green?

24 A. Not that I know of.

25 Q. Any other involvement in this, in Mr.

1 Whitfield's cases other than what we have discussed?

2 A. No, ma'am.

3 MS. MANUELE: I don't have any other  
4 questions. Do you guys?

5 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: I don't either.

6 THE WITNESS: Thanks. I'll read.

7 (Concluded at 10:56 a.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF OATH

STATE OF FLORIDA  
COUNTY OF HILLSBOROUGH

I, the undersigned authority, certify that  
Frances Elena Johnson, personally appeared before me and  
was duly sworn.

WITNESS my hand and official seal this 26th day  
of September, 2023.



Nathan F. Perkins, RDR  
Notary Public - State of Florida  
My Commission Expires: 7/18/2025  
Commission No. HH 122841

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF FLORIDA  
COUNTY OF HILLSBOROUGH

I, Nathan F. Perkins, Registered Diplomate Reporter, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the deposition of Frances Elena Johnson; that a review of the transcript was requested; and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

I further certify that I am not a relative, employee, attorney, or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

Dated this 26th day of September, 2023.



Nathan F. Perkins, RDR

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WITNESS' SIGNATURE PAGE

PLEASE ATTACH TO THE DEPOSITION OF FRANCES ELENA JOHNSON  
TAKEN ON FEBRUARY 21, 2023, IN THE CASE OF STATE OF  
FLORIDA VS. CORNELIUS TREVON WHITFIELD.

Job No. FLA5759448

PAGE      LINE      CORRECTION AND REASON THEREFOR

I HAVE READ THE FOREGOING PAGES AND, EXCEPT FOR ANY  
CORRECTIONS OR AMENDMENTS INDICATED ABOVE, I HEREBY  
SUBSCRIBE TO THE ACCURACY OF THIS TRANSCRIPT.

\_\_\_\_\_  
FRANCES ELENA JOHNSON

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

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WITNESS TO SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
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September 26, 2023  
Officer Frances Elena Johnson  
C/O: Theodora Taktikos-Danzig, Esquire  
County Justice Center  
eservice@flsa6.gov

Re: 2/21/2023 deposition of Frances Elena Johnson  
State of Florida vs. Cornelius Trevon Whitfield

Dear Sir/Madam:

This letter is to advise that the transcript of the above-referenced deposition has been completed and is available for review. Please email the signed errata sheet to transcripts-fl@veritext.com or sign below to waive review of this transcript.

It is suggested that the review of this transcript be completed within 30 days of your receipt of this letter, as considered reasonable under Federal Rules\*; however, there is no Florida Statute to this regard.

The original of this transcript has been forwarded to the ordering party and your errata, once received, will be forwarded to all ordering parties.

Sincerely,

Nathan F. Perkins, RDR  
Veritext Legal Solutions

Cc: Jessica Manuele, Esquire

WAIVER:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby waive the reading & signing of my deposition transcript.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deponent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*Federal Civil Procedure Rule 30(e)/Florida Civil Procedure Rule 1.310(e)

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FLORIDA RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

Rule 1.310

(e) Witness Review. If the testimony is transcribed, the transcript shall be furnished to the witness for examination and shall be read to or by the witness unless the examination and reading are waived by the witness and by the parties. Any changes in form or substance that the witness wants to make shall be listed in writing by the officer with a statement of the reasons given by the witness for making the changes. The changes shall be attached to the transcript. It shall then be signed by the witness unless the parties waived the signing or the witness is ill, cannot be found, or refuses to sign. If the transcript is not signed by the witness within a reasonable time after it is furnished to the witness, the officer shall sign the transcript and state on the transcript the waiver, illness, absence of the witness, or refusal to sign with any reasons given therefor. The deposition may then be used as fully as though signed unless the court holds that the reasons given for the refusal to sign require rejection of

the deposition wholly or partly, on motion under  
rule 1.330(d)(4).

DISCLAIMER: THE FOREGOING CIVIL PROCEDURE RULES  
ARE PROVIDED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.  
THE ABOVE RULES ARE CURRENT AS OF APRIL 1,  
2019. PLEASE REFER TO THE APPLICABLE STATE RULES  
OF CIVIL PROCEDURE FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION.

VERITEXT LEGAL SOLUTIONS

COMPANY CERTIFICATE AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Veritext Legal Solutions represents that the foregoing transcript is a true, correct and complete transcript of the colloquies, questions and answers as submitted by the court reporter. Veritext Legal Solutions further represents that the attached exhibits, if any, are true, correct and complete documents as submitted by the court reporter and/or attorneys in relation to this deposition and that the documents were processed in accordance with our litigation support and production standards.

Veritext Legal Solutions is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of client and witness information, in accordance with the regulations promulgated under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), as amended with respect to protected health information and the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, as amended, with respect to Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Physical transcripts and exhibits are managed under strict facility and personnel access controls. Electronic files of documents are stored in encrypted form and are transmitted in an encrypted

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Inquiries about Veritext Legal Solutions' confidentiality and security policies and practices should be directed to Veritext's Client Services Associates indicated on the cover of this document or at [www.veritext.com](http://www.veritext.com).