

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, PINELLAS COUNTY

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Plaintiff,

Case Nos. 21-08749-CF

21-01513-CF

vs.

21-01099-CF

CORNELIUS TREVON WHITFIELD,

Defendant.

/

PROCEEDINGS: Pretrial Hearing

DATE: April 7, 2025

BEFORE: The Honorable Philip J. Federico  
Circuit Court Judge

PLACE: Pinellas County Justice Center  
14250 49th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida 33762

REPORTER: Mary Tolson  
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A P P E A R A N C E S

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P R O C E E D I N G S

THE COURT: Greetings.

MR. KOSKINAS: This is the only thing on the calendar.

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Is it really?

MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah.

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Oh.

MR. KOSKINAS: I was surprised by that.

THE COURT: Monday is trial day.

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Oh, I guess (unintelligible).

THE COURT: Not today, but most Monday's are trial days.

MR. KOSKINAS: Today's trial day. Are you ready?

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: No. We have depositions today.

THE COURT: Hi.

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Hi.

Is Mr. Whitfield here?

THE BAILIFF: I ordered him. Let me go check.

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Thank you.

THE COURT: So, you guys got some deposition today?

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Today, tomorrow, Wednesday. We have things still outstanding.

THE BAILIFF: He's up.

1 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Great. We'll be right back.

2 THE COURT: Sure.

3 (Unrelated conversations.)

4 THE COURT: They're in the back.

5 MR. MCGREEN: Perfect. Thank you, Your Honor.

6 (Thereupon, there was a pause in the proceedings.)

7 THE COURT: All right. You want Mr. Whitfield  
8 to join us?

9 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes, please.

10 THE COURT: All right.

11 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I just realized that we don't  
12 have a reporter.

13 THE COURT: I thought we talked about it and  
14 said we were just using this --

15 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Okay.

16 THE COURT: -- as scheduling and we'd have one  
17 at the next --

18 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Okay.

19 THE COURT: If that's okay?

20 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yeah. I guess we just won't  
21 discuss anything substantive.

22 THE COURT: Okay.

23 All right. We're here on State of Florida  
24 versus Cornelius Whitfield, 21-01099 was originally  
25 set for trial today on murder, attempt murder,

1 robbery charges; we also had pending 21-01513, three  
2 counts murder first degree, attempt murder.

3 We were scheduled for trial, we realized we had  
4 a lot to accomplish including a serious amount of  
5 depositions. We decided that alternatively leave it  
6 set for trial so the subpoenas would stay out but  
7 people would show and we were trying to accomplish  
8 all the depositions we needed so that the next date we had  
9 would actually be our trial date. I think I  
10 summarized how we arrived, right?

11 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We -- we agree.

12 THE COURT: So, are we ready for deposition today  
13 I guess is where we're at?

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes. I think we have  
15 something like seven depositions with witnesses  
16 scheduled between about 9:45 and 2:15 today. We have  
17 additional depositions tomorrow and the lead  
18 detective is on Wednesday.

19 THE COURT: Okay.

20 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I think there's been some  
21 shuffling of things.

22 We have not subpoenaed them ourselves. The  
23 State has indicated that they're going to rely on the  
24 trial subpoenas for this week.

25 THE COURT: Okay.

1 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: And I believe confirmation  
2 has been made with many of the witnesses if not all.

3 THE COURT: All right. So, lets get that done.  
4 So, let's figure out -- while we're contemplating  
5 getting that done over the next three days, what do  
6 we want to -- what do we want to set for next?  
7 Another trial date; is that the plan?

8 MR. KOSKINAS: We've already got it. I think  
9 tentatively we set the trial date for -- at the last  
10 hearing -- for 7/28.

11 THE COURT: Okay.

12 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We have --

13 MR. KOSKINAS: It's what we all agreed to.

14 THE COURT: Okay.

15 MR. KOSKINAS: Whether -- I don't know the --

16 THE COURT: Yeah. I don't know that I've put  
17 that on the record.

18 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: So, it was a tentative  
19 scheduling.

20 MR. KOSKINAS: Right.

21 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: And we've looked -- we looked  
22 at our schedules again as well as some potential  
23 Defense witnesses and we do have conflicts with that  
24 date. So, unfortunately, 7/28 is not going to work  
25 for the Defense.

1 THE COURT: All right.

2 All right. I shutter to ask, but I guess that  
3 means we got to start after that and go from there.  
4 The next week is my judge's conference, which has  
5 gotten canceled by hurricanes the last two years.  
6 So, I need to continue to get my judicial education.  
7 You think after 31 years, but apparently, there's  
8 still more to figure out.

9 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yeah. Unfortunately, Ms.  
10 Russell and I have a number of things set at the end  
11 of this year including one -- several first-degree  
12 homicides, one death penalty case in front Judge  
13 Bulone. So, our schedule is pretty nightmarish until  
14 the beginning of 2026. We do apologize to everybody  
15 for that.

16 THE COURT: You guys need to get -- you just  
17 can't -- you and -- you guys and Paige are the only  
18 ones, right?

19 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Catherine Garrett who's in  
20 Pasco and we are adding Willengy Wicks Ramos [sic] to  
21 our team in May. So, we'll have three death penalty  
22 -- first-chair-qualified attorneys, but that doesn't  
23 necessarily change our availability at the moment,  
24 which is I know a great frustration to a lot of  
25 people.

1           THE COURT: Big picture wise seven -- what are  
2 we seven or eight criminal divisions out here?  
3 Running death penalty cases --

4           MR. KOSKINAS: Seven.

5           THE COURT: -- murders and death penalty cases  
6 through two lawyers, that's a tough -- tough ask.

7           MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It's not --

8           THE COURT: It's a tough ask for you guys. I  
9 don't know how you're not going to get burned out in  
10 a year or two doing all --

11          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Oh, it's pretty bad.

12          We have 21 cases between Pinellas and Pasco.

13          THE COURT: All first degrees?

14          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Correct.

15          THE COURT: All DPs?

16          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Correct. That's not  
17 including non-death first-degree homicides. That is  
18 only death penalty cases.

19          THE COURT: Oh, my God. Jesus. I mean I've  
20 been doing this for 40 years and I think I've only  
21 probably -- 41 years and I've only tried probably 40  
22 death penalty cases between my time as a prosecutor  
23 and as a judge. The idea that you're going to do 21  
24 of them in what, the next three or four years?

25          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We certainly hope not.



1           THE COURT: It took me 41 years to do that many.  
2           And believe me I don't relish doing anymore,  
3 but, man, you guys are going to wear it out in that  
4 scenario.

5           Oh, God. I don't really want to go until '26,  
6 but I don't know that -- I mean I -- you have  
7 anything? Anything between now and then, any week  
8 that you -- well, is this going to be a week? I mean  
9 this is preparatory to the main case, right?

10          MR. KOSKINAS: Yes.

11          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It is. The State has  
12 indicated that this is an aggravator. Based on some  
13 of the discovery that's been recently filed it  
14 appears as though they're going to be bringing  
15 evidence from the second case into the first. We are  
16 still exploring the defenses that we may raise with  
17 regards to this case and the next.

18          THE COURT: Are you noticing that as *Williams*  
19 Rule?

20          MR. KOSKINAS: No. We don't -- I'm not bringing  
21 any acts of the second murders, but some of the --  
22 some of the items were found taken from the first  
23 scene were found at the second scene and things like  
24 that. We're going to clean it up so -- we're not  
25 going to talk about the second murder or murder scene

1 in the first trial.

2 THE COURT: What are you going to talk about? A  
3 second criminal investigation; is that how you're  
4 going to phrase it?

5 MR. KOSKINAS: Well, they came in contact -- I  
6 mean I don't know. We're going to discuss that with  
7 the Court obviously with the Court's permission, but  
8 yeah, we're going to discuss how they -- officers  
9 came in contact with the Defendant at the place in  
10 which he was residing, the Defendant at that location  
11 they discovered various items that were located in  
12 the Defendant's possession that were removed from the  
13 original crime scene. It doesn't seem like a  
14 difficult task at all to --

15 THE COURT: Well --

16 MR. KOSKINAS: -- clean that up.

17 THE COURT: -- if you're telling me you don't --  
18 can't do this year then it almost seems like we  
19 should finish these depositions this week and talk about  
20 whatever the other evidentiary issues -- I don't  
21 know. I --

22 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Well, there --

23 THE COURT: My normal case management techniques  
24 do not work in this scenario, this situation.

25 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I mean certainly we

1 anticipated that we would have some lengthy pretrial  
2 litigation, but we needed to finish the -- we need to  
3 finish the depositions --

4 THE COURT: Agreed.

5 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: -- in order to file those  
6 motions. Some of the motions have to do with  
7 civilian witnesses. I'm not certain that all of  
8 those witnesses are available this week.

9 The State has indicated that there are  
10 additional reports coming from FDLE; I don't think  
11 we've received those yet. So that person has not  
12 been set. So, there are some cross-over witnesses  
13 between the two cases. So, I've been hesitant to set  
14 those folks because I'm not as up to speed on the  
15 death penalty case as I'd like in order to take that  
16 deposition, because I think that, you know, for  
17 efficiency sake it's probably best to just depose one  
18 person at one time even if -- even if they are  
19 exposed to information on both cases.

20 So, I'm trying to do the best that I can in  
21 terms of --

22 THE COURT: No criticism from me. It's a  
23 complicated task. I'd -- I'm not in anyway -- oh,  
24 God. Well --

25 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I mean certainly we can come

1 back on a pretrial sometime soon. I just don't know  
2 if Your Honor wants --

3 THE COURT: No. I think we should get a trial  
4 date set --

5 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Okay.

6 THE COURT: -- at least on this.

7 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Okay.

8 THE COURT: And then I think we should -- we've  
9 got lots of issues we're going to have to come back  
10 on and do it step by step.

11 I mean you're going to have to -- the depos need  
12 to be done so we know what pretrial litigation we  
13 need to address and how we're going to try the first  
14 case and theoretically get to the second case. I  
15 don't need to ask what your opinion about -- what  
16 your opinion is on not setting the first one until  
17 January.

18 MR. KOSKINAS: You know what my opinion is,  
19 Judge. We've come a long -- oh, how we've changed.

20 Yeah. No, this is not something that the State  
21 feels is acceptable. Judge, that kind of time frame  
22 for a delay is not normal, it's not in the normal  
23 course of things. I understand the predicament that  
24 the Public Defender's Office finds themselves in, but  
25 that should not affect the victim's next of kin in

1       this case, it should not affect the time frame of the  
2       Court, we can't, Judge, turn over the calendar of the  
3       court system to the Public Defender because they say  
4       they have a conflict.

5               THE COURT:   Well --

6               MR. KOSKINAS:   Look, I understand but if we're  
7       going to get to that and we're just going to turn  
8       over the discretion of allowing the Defense attorney  
9       to make -- pick the trial date -- that's what we said  
10      last time, that's why we were here and that's why we  
11      all picked July 28th.

12              So, if we're going to do that, then let's have  
13      them produce their calendar so we can go week by week  
14      and what their calendar is so the Court can make an  
15      informed decision rather than the Defense coming in  
16      and going, oh, I have a conflict now all of a sudden.  
17      So, I can't do it until next year. I just don't  
18      think that's appropriate and I don't think the Court  
19      should.

20              THE COURT:   Well, while I appreciate that  
21      sentiment, you're putting me in a position of  
22      cannibalizing somebody else in a robe down the hall  
23      if they have other trials set and then -- then you  
24      get in a position of, is Judge Federico's murder  
25      trial more important than judge whoever's down the

1 hallway? I would say Judge Helinger, but she's gone.

2 MR. KOSKINAS: Well, again, Judge, we're just  
3 assuming because we haven't seen their calendar. So,  
4 are they now announcing for the record that they have  
5 a murder trial every week between now and the  
6 beginning of next year?

7 THE COURT: No, they're not -- they're not --

8 MR. KOSKINAS: I do not think that's the case.

9 THE COURT: They're not saying that. But I  
10 guess then at least I should go through the exercise  
11 of give me a week or two that you're not set and then  
12 tell me what the problems would be with that I guess  
13 is where we're at I suppose.

14 I mean I -- they don't want to take you at your  
15 word that you can't try this case until January.  
16 They want me to go step by step I guess and say can  
17 you do this on August whatever or September whatever.

18 I mean my calendar, for good or for bad, isn't  
19 that bad between now and --

20 MR. KOSKINAS: How about July 28th, Judge? What  
21 happened on July 28th? I'm just curious. We all  
22 were here at the last court date, we all  
23 acknowledged, we all checked our calendars --

24 THE COURT: All right. Why don't we --

25 MR. KOSKINAS: -- we all said --

1 THE COURT: Why don't we --

2 MR. KOSKINAS: -- that was a fine available  
3 date. Now all of a sudden weeks later, oh, I can't  
4 do it for six months after that date.

5 THE COURT: What do we got that's blocking us  
6 for July 28th? I got to do this step by step I  
7 guess. What happened to July 28th possibility? I  
8 know we weren't a hundred percent sure. Did  
9 something intervene? Another judge's murder trial?

10 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: No. We have a matter that we  
11 could discuss with Your Honor ex parte, but not  
12 something for the record.

13 THE COURT: All right. Why don't you come up  
14 off the record and tell me what's going on on that  
15 one if you don't mind?

16 State -- can the State come up?

17 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: No. That's what ex parte is.

18 THE COURT: Oh.

19 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It's not just for the record.

20 THE COURT: Do you have a problem with me having  
21 this conversation with them? If you do, then I'll --  
22 I mean I -- you want me to inquire --

23 MR. KOSKINAS: I mean, again, now look at what  
24 situation we're in. We're going to tell secrets and  
25 the next of kin don't get to know why now they claim

1       that they have a conflict that doesn't exist. Nor  
2       does the State. Is it that private that the State  
3       can't know?

4               THE COURT: Well --

5               MR. KOSKINAS: It's just not appropriate, Judge.

6               THE COURT: Here's the problem: You know, when  
7       I'm a young judge and there's young lawyers in front  
8       of me that I feel like I got to shepherd them the  
9       whole step of the way. When I have experienced  
10      lawyers that know what they're doing, I try to take  
11      them at their word of what they're telling me and  
12      rely on their professionalism. But you're making me  
13      do this step by step, you know, are we going to  
14      detention at 3:00 today or not going to detention at  
15      3:00 today conversation.

16              So, you want me to ask them -- you have a  
17      privacy or confidentiality concern about what --

18              MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Correct.

19              THE COURT: So, if you don't want me to have  
20      that conversation with them, then I won't have that  
21      confidentiality, but then I'm left deciding on  
22      whether we can't do it on 7/28 for a reason that I  
23      could know, but I don't know regarding that. So, I  
24      might as well get my dart out and start throwing  
25      darts at the wall as far as that's concern on whether



1           that's a good reason to not do it on that day or not.

2           MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Look --

3           THE COURT: But I -- in good faith if you told  
4 me the same thing on the opposite side because of  
5 your experience and knowledge, I would give  
6 credibility to what you say.

7           MR. KOSKINAS: I understand, Judge. Well --

8           THE COURT: I don't think the Judge's job is to  
9 call out lawyers and say you're not credible to me  
10 especially when you're experienced and you've been  
11 practicing for a while and I know you know what  
12 you're doing and there's confidence. Either side  
13 gets the same level of respect and confidence from me  
14 in that regard.

15          MR. KOSKINAS: I have --

16          THE COURT: And they should I think.

17          MR. KOSKINAS: I have the utmost respect for the  
18 Defense and I'm not in anyway suggesting they're  
19 lying or misleading to the Court. However, Judge, I  
20 have a balancing act too. I have a group of people  
21 sitting here in the courtroom that have been here  
22 every time that have been frustrated because this  
23 Court has allowed this case to continue for years and  
24 trial dates be continued. So, yeah, I mean I have to  
25 do that.

1           So, I think I'm in a position where I do have to  
2           have the Court find out why we have conflicts between  
3           now and the next of the year -- between now and next  
4           year. That's just -- Judge, that's a -- we're  
5           talking about nine months.

6           THE COURT: All right. Well --

7           MR. KOSKINAS: They're saying I can't try this  
8           four-day long trial between now and nine months even  
9           though it's been set multiple times and discovery is  
10          almost complete. And I just think that we can --

11          THE COURT: Well --

12          MR. KOSKINAS: -- the Court can find a place to  
13          squeeze that in if the Court wants to.

14          THE COURT: I don't know given the depo schedule  
15          for the next three days that I can say complete. I  
16          hope that the people show up that are supposed to and  
17          then we may be closer to complete. I'm not going to  
18          have a private conversation with them given the tone  
19          of our discussion. So, I suppose I'm just going to  
20          have to rely on them telling me they can't do 7/28 as  
21          the date and then figure out between then and the  
22          rest of the year what the other issues are. I'm not  
23          going to have an ex parte communication with an  
24          objection.

25          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: That's fine.

1 THE COURT: But I'll trust that you're telling  
2 me that there's a sufficient conflict which you were  
3 willing to share on 7/28.

4 So, do you want me to go weekly after 7/28 or do  
5 you want me to just get a general gist of August,  
6 September, October, November and December with them?

7 I mean that -- that's kind of where I'm at. I  
8 mean I'm -- I'm --

9 MR. KOSKINAS: It's April 7th right now, Judge.

10 THE COURT: I assume you have other -- do you  
11 have other murder trials in August?

12 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I do.

13 THE COURT: Which week?

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I have a month-long murder  
15 trial starting the week of 20 -- August 25th.

16 THE COURT: Who's that --

17 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: But I am not the only person  
18 on this team.

19 THE COURT: Who is that in front of?

20 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It's in front of Judge  
21 LaBruzzo.

22 THE COURT: Is that a death penalty case?

23 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It is not.

24 THE COURT: First time set?

25 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Not -- no. It is not the

1 first time set. It is a massive undertaking as I  
2 mentioned. It's about four weeks long. That's what  
3 we're setting aside for that case.

4 THE COURT: So presumably the week before, if  
5 not two weeks before, you're going to be fully  
6 ensconced in prepping for that?

7 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: That's correct.

8 THE COURT: And at least a week after the month  
9 you're gong to be exhausted and catching up on the  
10 rest you missed --

11 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Correct.

12 THE COURT: -- during that month?

13 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: And then the 6th Ms. Russell  
14 and I are beginning a death penalty case in front of  
15 Judge Bulone.

16 THE COURT: Sixth of --

17 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: October.

18 MS. RUSSELL: I also have a first-degree murder  
19 from September 29th -- the week of September 29th  
20 that's been set for the third time in front of Judge  
21 Sercus.

22 THE COURT: Is that a solo for you?

23 MS. RUSSELL: Yes.

24 THE COURT: Solo --

25 MS. RUSSELL: Well, along with friends and

1           colleagues.

2           MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Just not any other members of  
3           this team.

4           MS. RUSSELL: No, not any other members of this  
5           team.

6           THE COURT: All right. So, we're into October.  
7           What's next?

8           MS. RUSSELL: I'm sorry. That was St. John, not  
9           Sercus.

10          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We anticipate that case  
11          running into November because of some scheduling  
12          conflicts.

13          THE COURT: You got two weeks in November or a  
14          couple of weeks in November before Thanksgiving,  
15          right?

16          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I don't think so.

17          MS. RUSSELL: I have a first-degree murder,  
18          Christopher Myers, in front of -- first week in  
19          November. And then another one starting November  
20          10th for Avedisian in front of Judge Matthey.

21          THE COURT: Fa la la la la.

22          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Which is two weeks.

23          MS. RUSSELL: Right.

24          THE COURT: What do you got in November?

25          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I mean I anticipate that

1 Mr. Chambers might be running into November. I do  
2 not have other cases set in November.

3 THE COURT: And what do you got in December? I  
4 didn't even ask about yours.

5 MR. MCGREEN: For the most part open that far  
6 into the year. So...

7 THE COURT: You're tagging along and gaining  
8 experience as the third one in.

9 MR. MCGREEN: That's correct.

10 THE COURT: So that we're not in this place  
11 three years from now.

12 MR. MCGREEN: Right.

13 THE COURT: Having this many murder trials. You  
14 guys are gearing up to try and get a number of  
15 younger, and I mean no disparagement by this, younger  
16 lawyers murder trial experience so that you have a  
17 deeper bench when it gets to trying these kind of  
18 cases then.

19 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It would be ideal.

20 THE COURT: Correct.

21 MR. MCGREEN: Yes, sir.

22 MS. RUSSELL: First week in December --

23 THE COURT: Welcome.

24 MS. RUSSELL: First week in December we have  
25 Andre Watkins with Ms. Walker.

1           THE COURT: Yeah. I don't like December -- I've  
2 never liked December murder trials anyway. I've  
3 never had any luck with them to be honest with you.  
4 I mean they go, but they're -- some times of the year  
5 its just tough to -- it's hard to get jurors that  
6 time of year, it's hard to get people to focus on  
7 those kinds of things.

8           So, I mean, what do you want me to say? I'm  
9 going to -- I'm going to put myself over any of those  
10 other cases. One of them is mine. Am I going to --  
11 am I going to take this in -- in December -- this in  
12 December rather than -- is January realistic then  
13 given what we've discussed or?

14           I mean I could cannibalize myself with Watkins  
15 in December, but like I said, I don't -- I've never  
16 had pretty good luck with -- I mean over 41 years I  
17 have some experience with December trials. I know  
18 how they go. I've had enough of them. It's just  
19 something about that time of year, post-Thanksgiving,  
20 early Christmas getting jurors to focus on serious  
21 cases is a tough -- tough experience at least that  
22 I've had. They walk into Courtroom 1 and say, how  
23 the heck can I get out of here as quick as I can to  
24 be honest with you.

25           Is January doable?

1 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes.

2 THE COURT: Okay. Do we want to -- given the  
3 lapse of time we're going to have, we're setting this  
4 one in Jan do we want to set the second one -- or is  
5 that precipitous to set that sometime next year?

6 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: If Your Honor would like to  
7 set the second one sometime next year so that we can  
8 have the opportunity to reach out to witnesses,  
9 potential witnesses for availability, we can  
10 certainly do that. And we are mindful of the number  
11 of depositions that still need to be taken on that  
12 case, the discovery that needs to be done in that  
13 case much of which is interrelated. So we can  
14 continue to work on that.

15 THE COURT: It's -- it doesn't -- the concept of  
16 the whole system is to set a trial date -- and I mean  
17 -- this is not against you guys. We're turning the  
18 system inside out. You set trials because you're  
19 ready and you're going to have a trial on that date.

20 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Understood.

21 THE COURT: When you set a trial to hold the  
22 date over other people having the date it totally  
23 turns -- it's inverse of what the whole process is  
24 supposed to be.

25 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We understand.



1           THE COURT: You're just having a reservation  
2           that you may or may not keep. Right? Which is the  
3           inverse of what the whole process is supposed to be.  
4           Arraignment, pretrial, trial. But then you get  
5           yourself so backed up that you wind up in a place  
6           that you're never supposed to be in the first place.  
7           And I don't -- I really don't have -- I'm at a loss  
8           as to what, you know, what to do about it. Right.

9           MR. KOSKINAS: No, Judge.

10          THE COURT: You know, the old -- the old --

11          MR. KOSKINAS: I disagree completely. I think  
12          the Court has the power to command a trial date, I  
13          think the Court has the power. I mean this is a new  
14          revelation to me, Judge. We've always had trial  
15          dates and the Court always forces the Defense to do  
16          trials and forced the State to do trials and that's  
17          the purpose.

18          So, I understand the Court's -- what the Court's  
19          pattern record with, but I couldn't disagree more.  
20          So, I think if the Court was intent on getting this  
21          case tried between the first -- between now and the  
22          first of the year, the Court could absolutely do  
23          that. It is clear that it's the Court's intention  
24          not to try this case or to allow the Defense to set  
25          it out to the first of the year. So that is the

1 Court's preference. I mean the Court -- you have  
2 the -- the discretion to do that, Judge.

3 THE COURT: I'm not sure I would say preference.  
4 You want me to cannibalize the hallway? Are we going  
5 to go up and down the hallway and say my murder case  
6 is more important than your murder case?

7 MR. KOSKINAS: Well, I mean let's be honest,  
8 the intellectually honest right now, how many trials  
9 are they actually going to have between now and the  
10 first of the year? How many have they had in the  
11 last 12 months? How many of their trials have  
12 they've announced or that the Court's banking on  
13 cannibalizing or given priority to truth be told,  
14 those aren't going to go and you know it.

15 THE COURT: You want me to double book you on  
16 another one of their murder trials somewhere else? I  
17 mean its of no loss to me.

18 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: No.

19 THE COURT: I'm trying to take into account what  
20 the lawyers -- the amount of work the lawyers have to  
21 do. Having tried dozens of murder cases myself I  
22 know how much work goes into it. I can show up on a  
23 Monday and pick a jury on any case. It's not hard.  
24 I got 40 pages of voir dire notes. All I got to do  
25 is show up and say hey, welcome to my murder case.

1       It's -- you're the ones that have to do all the work  
2       to get to that point.

3               That's the biggest complaint people have about  
4       judges. Oh, you've been on the bench 30 years, you  
5       don't remember what it was like when you were a  
6       lawyer trying cases, right? That's the biggest  
7       complaint you hear about people.

8               I mean I can double book you on a -- on somebody  
9       else's murder case. Do I think all of those are  
10      going to go? Of course, they're not all going to go.  
11      Which it just grows on itself. I just don't know  
12      that that's -- like I said I'm -- I'm at a loss for  
13      the best way to proceed because this is so far down  
14      the road from where things started 40 years ago. You  
15      didn't have this many cases, lawyers didn't have this  
16      many murder trials, and you just set it and said  
17      we're going. Show up. See who shows as witnesses  
18      and pick a jury and let's go. It's gotten  
19      considerably more complex since then.

20              So, I'm going to set this one in January. Which  
21      week? Do you want to start on the 5th right after  
22      the New Year or is that problematic for anybody?

23              MS. SEIFER-SMITH: My preference would be to  
24      start on the 12th just so we have a cushion between  
25      the holidays and the trial.

1 THE COURT: Yeah. My only concern is when is  
2 MLK day next year? Do we know when that is?

3 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It's not showing on my  
4 calendar.

5 MR. KOSKINAS: 19th.

6 THE COURT: Do you have -- is that --

7 MR. KOSKINAS: 19th.

8 THE COURT: The 19th? All right. So, let's go  
9 1/12 on the 21-01099. 1/12 of '26 for trial. The  
10 other one, let's pick a date now for the second one  
11 so that at least we have a proposed trial date.

12 How long after the first one? A couple months?  
13 Month?

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I'd say at least two. I'd  
15 say we -- we would definitely need several weeks.

16 THE COURT: Feb, March?

17 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: At least March.

18 THE COURT: Later in March?

19 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes, please.

20 THE COURT: All right. So, let's go --

21 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Perhaps after spring break.  
22 I know that gets very messy for folks.

23 THE COURT: Well, I was going to say 3/16, but  
24 usually spring break is around that date. You don't  
25 happen to know when spring break in '26 is, do you?

1 THE CLERK: I have no idea.

2 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I can ask --

3 THE COURT: I'm going to say -- I mean this week  
4 [sic] it was just -- it was the week of the 16th. It  
5 was this week. I was going to say 3/23. How does  
6 that sound?

7 MR. MCGREEN: March 14th through the 22nd is  
8 spring break.

9 THE COURT: Look at that. You been around a  
10 hundred years sometimes things you just kind of know  
11 it from experience, huh.

12 All right. 3/23 then on the other one --

13 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes.

14 THE COURT: -- of '26. So, we have trial --  
15 I -- I'm going to need to keep these trial dates. I  
16 mean that's the, you know, we're talking about for  
17 the second murder trial one week short of a year from  
18 now. I think that gives you sufficient time.

19 Anything else that comes up between now and then  
20 you're going to have to just say I'm not  
21 cannibalizing Federico over this deal if another  
22 judge says that. And if they do or try to you're  
23 going to have to come see me and I'm going to have to  
24 have a back-hallway conversation with somebody and  
25 pull -- if not rank, at least years of time working

1       doing this to keep precedence as far as that's  
2       concerned.

3               MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Understood.

4               THE COURT: All right. We need to finish up the  
5       depos and we need to figure out motion-wise what's  
6       going to get filed. So, when do we need a pretrial  
7       from today's date to talk about whatever else we need  
8       to get done so we're ready in January. You want a  
9       month, six weeks, eight weeks? What do you need to  
10      get your stuff filed after you finish the depos so  
11      that we can litigate the things we need before  
12      January and then be ready for next March?

13              MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Why don't we say six to eight  
14      weeks?

15              THE COURT: All right. So, eight weeks from  
16      today would get us to the first of June. Let's see.  
17      I got -- how about that Wednesday the 4th of June for  
18      a pretrial?

19              MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I'm out most of that week.  
20      Could we have the following week?

21              THE COURT: The 11th?

22              MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Could we have any other day?

23              THE COURT: The 10th?

24              MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Sure. That works for me if  
25      that works for everybody else?

1 THE COURT: State, is that okay with you?

2 MR. KOSKINAS: That's fine, Judge.

3 THE COURT: All right. So, we're going to set a  
4 pretrial on both cases for 6/10 of '26 [sic]. I'm  
5 anticipating whatever additional motions relative to  
6 the litigation hopefully will be filed by then. Is  
7 that the plan?

8 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I don't know if they'll be  
9 filed by then. But certainly, I can report back  
10 regarding the depositions. Some -- I'm waiting on  
11 some depositions based on what the State has  
12 represented to me will be filed in discovery. So, I  
13 haven't been able to set the depositions of a few  
14 people.

15 THE COURT: I just don't want to run into any  
16 kind of problem with our January date as far as  
17 litigating in advance.

18 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I wouldn't anticipate that.

19 THE COURT: So, I'd like to be further advanced  
20 on where we're headed by June than we are now.

21 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Certainly, I'd expect that.

22 THE COURT: I'm not setting any -- if you  
23 haven't filed them by then they're just, you know, I  
24 mean I -- you can't do that in a murder case, right?  
25 I mean I suppose you could but not anything that

1 would be upheld on appeal. I just want to be further  
2 along for what we need to do so that we're not  
3 bumping up against having to have, you know, two-day  
4 motion hearings over the Christmas holiday to try and  
5 get ready for the January trial date. That would not  
6 be my preference in any form or fashion. So...

7 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I don't think it's anybody's  
8 preference.

9 THE COURT: All right. I know. But bring me  
10 some progress at least on 6/10 so we know what we got  
11 to get done between then and January and then  
12 respectively in March. Okay?

13 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yep.

14 THE COURT: Is there anything else we need to  
15 address today?

16 MR. KOSKINAS: I don't think so.

17 THE COURT: All right. I appreciate it. Thank  
18 you. All right.

19 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Thank you.

20 MS. RUSSELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

21 (Proceedings concluded.)  
22  
23  
24  
25



CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF PINELLAS

I, Mary Tolson, a digital court reporter for the Sixth Judicial Circuit, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did transcribe the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and correct record of said proceedings.

DATED this 5th day of May, 2025.

/S Mary Tolson

Mary Tolson

Digital Court Reporter

Sixth Judicial Circuit