

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR PINELLAS COUNTY
CASE NUMBER CRC21-01099CFANO
CRC21-01513CFANO

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

CORNELIUS WHITFIELD,

Defendant.

_____ /

PROCEEDINGS: PRETRIAL HEARING

BEFORE: THE HONORABLE PHILIP J. FEDERICO
Circuit Court Judge

DATE: June 10, 2025

PLACE: Courtroom 7
Pinellas County Justice Center
14250 - 49th Street North
Clearwater, Florida 33762

REPORTER: Carla Jessal
Registered Professional Reporter

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**APPEARING ON BEHALF OF
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**APPEARING ON BEHALF OF
THE DEFENDANT CORNELIUS WHITFIELD:**

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(P R O C E E D I N G S)

THE COURT: Are you ready for Mr. Whitfield?

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We are.

(THE DEFENDANT ENTERED THE COURTROOM)

THE COURT: All right. Mr. Whitfield has
joined us on all of his matters.

Madam Court Reporter, are you ready?

THE COURT REPORTER: Yes, sir.

THE COURT: 21-01099, which is murder first
degree, attempt murder, robbery, 21-01513, I think
is the ones that are set for trial in March of next
year on three counts of murder in the first degree
and attempt murder, right?

MR. KOSKINAS: Well, they're both set.

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: They're both set.

MR. KOSKINAS: They're also in January.

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Correct.

THE COURT: Right.

MR. KOSKINAS: Right. The first one is --

THE COURT: Oh, yeah. We've got one set in
January and one set --

MR. KOSKINAS: Yes.

THE COURT: -- in March.

MR. KOSKINAS: Right.

THE COURT: Right. The one is preparatory to

1 the one you're seeking the death penalty on.

2 MR. KOSKINAS: Correct. Yes, sir.

3 THE COURT: All right. This is to get
4 together to see how discovery is proceeding?

5 MR. KOSKINAS: Yes. And it is proceeding and
6 we've got more depositions scheduled. The defense
7 has more depositions scheduled I think as early as
8 this Thursday.

9 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Thursday.

10 MR. KOSKINAS: So we're chugging along.

11 THE COURT: All right. Are we gonna -- what,
12 did they change -- because I haven't been to a
13 conference in the last two years. Did they change
14 the discovery rules on penalty phase? Is there a
15 certain amount of time you have to get witnesses
16 out, or no? They didn't change it as far as
17 discovery?

18 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: No. But we're familiar
19 with the rules. We know our obligations.

20 THE COURT: The time frames on when you've got
21 to declare you want it and then respond, right,
22 those have changed?

23 MR. KOSKINAS: No. That was the declare death
24 I think you're talking about.

25 THE COURT: Yeah.

1 MR. KOSKINAS: When you have to declare death.

2 THE COURT: Right.

3 MR. KOSKINAS: We did that a long time ago.

4 THE COURT: No, I know.

5 MR. KOSKINAS: That's 45 days within the --

6 THE COURT: Back in the day there were no time
7 limits.

8 MR. KOSKINAS: Oh, I know.

9 THE COURT: There were no time limits on that.

10 MR. KOSKINAS: Right.

11 THE COURT: There's time limits on that, but
12 there's not on penalty. It's just normal
13 discovery, penalty phase witnesses?

14 MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah.

15 THE COURT: What are you gonna -- have you
16 listed those already, or no?

17 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: No, we have not. We're not
18 certain of who our witnesses are going to be, and
19 so just like for any other case --

20 THE COURT: I guess you want to take the
21 depositions --

22 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: -- we would not list them
23 until we are certain.

24 THE COURT: You want to finish, probably, the
25 guilt phase depositions before you make some decisions

1 about that strategically, I would guess.

2 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Probably.

3 THE COURT: Yeah, that probably makes sense.

4 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Candidly, I don't believe
5 that many, if any, depositions were taken on the
6 death penalty case prior to my taking over the
7 case. So the depositions that we have coming up
8 are for both the first degree homicide with respect
9 to Mr. Barnes, as well as the death penalty case.
10 There are some witnesses that do overlap. We're,
11 obviously, mindful of that, but there's a lot of
12 moving parts.

13 THE COURT: I always ask since two people have
14 said yes in my career. Do you guys want me to
15 handle this as opposed to 12 in the box?

16 MR. KOSKINAS: I -- I -- I don't know if the
17 defense is asking that or not.

18 THE COURT: I've had two people do it. So far
19 you're one and one.

20 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It's a conversation we'll
21 have with our client, but that's not something that
22 we're prepared --

23 THE COURT: I'm just saying. I mean, most
24 judges won't even entertain that conversation, I
25 don't think. I entertained it and -- who is the

1 guy with Downey? I can't remember the guy's name
2 that I gave --

3 MR. KOSKINAS: Craig Wall.

4 THE COURT: No, that wasn't the guy.

5 MR. KOSKINAS: Well, you did that one.

6 THE COURT: I did, but --

7 MR. KOSKINAS: He wanted you to do that one.

8 THE COURT: No, this was -- yeah, yeah. No,
9 the one was Khadafy. That's still on. Did you do
10 that? Were you on Khadafy?

11 MS. RUSSELL: Just in postconviction,
12 your Honor.

13 THE COURT: Saying everything I did wrong.
14 The other one --

15 MS. RUSSELL: No, no, there weren't a lot of
16 things you did wrong.

17 THE COURT: The other one was a multiple
18 homicide. The first homicide was tried in front of
19 Downey, and then he left, and then the second
20 homicide I -- they were seeking it on him, and I
21 wound up giving him life in that scenario. I'm
22 just revealing that so you understand what the
23 history is when you sit down to have that with your
24 client.

25 You guys would have to agree also.

1 MR. KOSKINAS: Uh-huh.

2 THE COURT: I mean, efficiency wise, it's a
3 much different experience with everything we're
4 going to have to litigate if it's to a judge rather
5 than to a jury, but there's a lot that goes into
6 that whole scenario, obviously. I just broached
7 the subject because now is probably the time to
8 broach it as opposed to much closer to that
9 scenario or when we're actually doing it.

10 All right. So we've got trial set in January
11 and March. So when do you want to get together
12 again, I guess, for our little "how's discovery
13 going" meeting?

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We have depositions set
15 this month and then again -- I don't believe in
16 July. We have dates set out in August.

17 THE COURT: So you want to go "see you in
18 September"?

19 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We could do that. See
20 where we are.

21 THE COURT: Okay. All right. Let me see what
22 I got in September. You guys prefer a Tuesday?

23 MR. KOSKINAS: It doesn't matter to the State.

24 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: It does not matter to us.

25 THE COURT: Either 9/16 or 9/30? Either of

1 those good?

2 MR. KOSKINAS: 9/16 works pretty good.

3 THE COURT: How about you guys?

4 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We'll do that.

5 THE COURT: All right. Let's set an
6 intervening pretrial -- keep the trial dates.
7 We'll set an intervening pretrial on 9/16 of '25 at
8 8:30.

9 I'm not leaning on you about that conversation
10 either. I mean, I don't want you to think that one
11 way or the other. I'm just saying it cuts down on
12 a lot of time. You don't have to bring in jurors.
13 Eventually, the judge is gonna have to -- well,
14 obviously, if it's a life without, the judge
15 doesn't have to make the call. Susan Schaeffer
16 aside. She's the only one that had one upheld. Of
17 course, I was a prosecutor and managed to get a
18 life rec. on a case that the judge, who was totally
19 anti-death penalty, decided was an override case
20 for a death sentence. What's the irony of that,
21 right? But, anyway, I'll leave that to posterity.

22 All right. 9/16 at 8:30 we'll get together
23 again and see how things have been proceeding.
24 All right?

25 MR. KOSKINAS: Thank you.

MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Thank you.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA)

COUNTY OF PINELLAS)

I, Carla Jessal, Registered Professional Reporter,
certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically
report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript
is a true record.

DATED this 12th day of November, 2025.

/s Carla Jessal

Carla Jessal

Registered Professional Reporter