

The Dayton Weekly NEWS

Ex-Felon Wins Fight Against Murder Charge



Willie Feaster, 45 exits the Montgomery County Courthouse after being freed of murder charges two weeks ago.

By: D. G. Black

Most of the 45 years of Willie John Feaster's life has been a series of disappointments, crime and imprisonment. Prior to his arrest on April 6, 2002 for murder of a 26 year old Singapore native Rajeev K. Des, Feaster felt he was on his way to a life of helping to undo many

of the wrongs in his life.

On the evening of April 6, 2002 Feaster and his roommate Des who both lived at 29 South Findlay in a rooming house had an altercation which resulted in Des pulling a knife and Feaster defending himself by also pulling a knife and killing the

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to the incident on Findlay Street, Willie had spent twenty years in prison for convictions of unarmed robbery and breaking and entering.

Life in prison and had taken various turns for the Springfield, Ohio native who had spent the majority of his youth confined to a prison cell. Even though Feaster said the stabbing death of Des was in self defense as he was defending himself against a knife attack, he was arrested by Dayton Police and charged with murder. His bond was set at \$250,000. He was placed in the Montgomery County Jail.

Before the incident of April 6, Feaster had been free from confinement for approximately two years and had been working with area organizations and groups advocating against crime and drug use among young people. He spent the majority of his time speaking to young people and church groups and planning workshops dealing with the issues of crime and punishment. He hosted a cable television program where invited guest would talk about issues relating to fighting the ills of crime in the community. Feaster had been working on a special workshop planned for April 20, 2002 with topics dealing with murder in the community and pain and suffering. He had invited several community leaders including Mayor Rhine McLin and City Commissioner Idothia Bootsie Neal to be apart of the forum.

Since coming to the Miami Valley area, Willie Feaster's story has appeared in several local news publications including the *Dayton Weekly News*. The stories reflected on a life embraced with two decades of prison. Feaster's cable television program brought to the attention a man who would eventually become an important ally in his life. Mr. Timothy Jenkins, a 62 year old Richmond, Indiana resident who had watched the Feaster program on cable television and was impressed by the his desire to make a difference in his life and the community.

After Feaster's arrest on murder charges, Jenkins stepped forward in support of his new found friend by assisting in hiring him an attorney and paying the \$10,000 attorney fees to re-

present him to the Montgomery County Courthouse. Feaster's area lawyer Daniel O'Brien. After a period of time Feaster decided that he would be best represented with other counsel and parted company's with O'Brien. For nearly nine months Willie Feaster represented himself pro-say. While watching cable television from the county jail he saw a show entitled "Court TV". On this show Cincinnati attorney Clyde Bennett was involved in a trial where he was defending an individual in a double homicide case. Feaster was struck by the way in which Bennett handled the case. According to Feaster "he was awesome". He said he wanted Bennett to represent him in his murder case. He petitioned the courts to have Bennett as his lawyer and was turned down because he was not an attorney from this county and if the county pays for an attorney to represent a county resident they must be from the county where the prisoner lives. But Feaster would not give up, and after several months the county decided to give in to Feaster, making it the first time in history that they would pay for the services of an attorney outside the county jurisdiction.

"I thank God I was represented by this wonderful man, Attorney Bennett," said Feaster. The first day Attorney Bennett walked into the courtroom in front of Judge David Gowdown, he said he wanted to put it in the record that he would walk out of the courthouse with Feaster as a freeman. Feaster said that Attorney Bennett fought for his life with a brilliant defense. After 17 months in the Montgomery County Jail, Feaster was finally a free man.

A jury of nine women and three men failed to reach a verdict after days of deliberation. Attorney Bennett petitioned Judge Gowdown to render a not guilty verdict. The judge complied and Willie John Feaster was freed on August 18, 2003.

At 45 years of age, a much calmer and spirit filled man is headed back where he stopped on the fateful night on April 6, 2002 to spread his brand of message that crime doesn't pay. Right now Feaster is looking for employment and a comfortable place to live, so he can rejoin his journey of attempting to make right some of his wrongs in life.