

Judge certifies felony charges against two men in homicide

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NEWPORT NEWS — A witness testified Monday that she was laying in her bed last year when a man came inside her room and pointed a gun in her face and told her to get up.

The witness, identified only as A.W. in court, testified during the preliminary hearing of Joe Lewis Thomas, 30, and Jason Robles, 31. Both men are charged with killing 32-year-old Katrice Major May 10, 2014, during a robbery at Walker Village Apartments.

A.W. testified that she was in her home with her boyfriend, cousin, Major, and four children at the time of the shooting. The witness was only identified by her initials during the hearing because she is one of the victims in the case. She testified that there were three men who entered her home around 3

a.m.

She said that Major referred to Thomas, of Carrollton, by his nickname.

"She was saying they don't have anything to do with this," A.W. testified that Major told Thomas.

In response, A.W. said Thomas told Major: "You didn't give a [expletive] about my seed when you did what you did."

A.W. testified that Thomas told the other two men to beat Major, and they followed his order.

Wearing black-framed glasses and dressed in a red Hampton Roads Regional Jail two-piece inmate outfit, Thomas snickered during A.W.'s testimony, shook his head and smiled at times. Robles had no visible reaction to her testimony.

A.W. said the men kicked and punched her and demanded drugs and money. A.W. said she told them she didn't have any drugs but that her wallet was upstairs.

At some point, one of the four children started crying upstairs. Thomas told one of

the men to "shut them up." They were later found tied up in an upstairs closet.

A.W. said she was kicked in the face and body and that the men said they would burn the house down. She said the men ordered her, her boyfriend, cousin and Major to get on the floor. The three men faced them as they were on the floor. All three men had guns in their hands, she testified.

"F it, shoot them all," A.W. testified Thomas said. "Then Robles shot first. Then they all started shooting. The bullets went into Katrice ... bullets went flying past me. Her body was

jerking"

Major was shot multiple times. She was pronounced dead at 4:13 a.m. A.W. was shot in the arm.

Thomas' defense attorney, Andrew A. Protogyrou, pointed out that A.W. initially told police the men had masks on their faces, questioning how she could know their identities. A.W. picked Thomas out of a police photo lineup.

Newport News General District Judge Richard C. Kerns certified several felony charges against Thomas and Robles, including first-degree murder, robbery, four counts of abduction and firearms charges.

The third man was not identified in court.

After the shooting, A.W. said the men "calmly walked out the door."

"Thomas shut the door behind him," she testified.

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