

eteering conspiracy.”

The case featured three killings, and several other shootings at people and into homes. Defendants were also charged with attempted murder after chasing down a Hampton school bus for miles in a quest to kill a rival gang member.

The defendants — all members of the 36th Street Bang Squad — were charged under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, the federal law used to prosecute Mafia members in the 1980s.

Two of the lead defendants, Martin L. Hunt Jr., 22, and Xavier S. Greene, 25, both of Newport News, were convicted of “murder in aid of racketeering” and “using a firearm resulting in death” in a double slaying outside a party on 25th Street near Wickham Avenue on April 6, 2015.

Four men opened fire at the home from across the street at 10:22 p.m., killing 13-year-old Jada Lashay Richardson — who was an unintended target — and 17-year-old Domingo Santiago Davis Jr.

The convictions against Hunt and Greene carry mandatory life prison terms under federal law.

“I’m so happy, I’m so happy, I’m so happy,” said



ROB OSTERMAIER/STAFF FILE

Friends and family of Jada Richardson and Domingo Santiago Davis Jr. comfort each other outside of the home where the two were killed in April 2015.

Jada’s mother Latoya Wilson, 39, of Newport News.

“It’s been a long journey, and just prayed all day, every day, that God should give me a truthful verdict,” she said through tears. “I believe the verdict was correct... You gotta forgive, and I been forgave, but you gotta pay for what you did. Y’all went shooting and didn’t care.”

Wilson said she was hoping to make it to Jada’s grave at Hampton Memorial Gardens on Tuesday afternoon before it closed. Jada would be 18 now. “I’m just going to tell her that we got justice,” Wilson said.

Domingo Davis’ aunt, Jamyce Evans, 37, of Newport News, said the family

was likewise satisfied.

“I’m happy they got justice,” Evans said. “That’s all we were asking for is justice. They took three innocent lives. They had no remorse, and I had no doubt in my mind that they weren’t going to get off for anything they did.”

In one big victory on the defense side, Deshaun Richardson, 24, of Newport News — one of the three defendants charged with murder and gun charges in the double killing — was acquitted of that charge.

Though Richardson was convicted in the racketeering conspiracy, doubts were raised at trial about whether he — or a key prosecution witness — was

an actual shooter on 25th Street.

The other man prosecutors said was a shooter in that double killing, Steven Harris, wasn’t on trial: The 21-year old was shot and killed in a Hampton parking lot seven months later.

Aside from the double slaying, the jurors in U.S. District Court also convicted Greene in the killing of 18-year-old Dewayne Leroy Parker on Newport News’ Ivey Avenue a month earlier, on March 8, 2015.

Prosecutors asserted that Harris shot Parker — followed by more shots by Greene — in retaliation for a social media post that humiliated a Bang Squad member.

Four other defendants were convicted of racketeering conspiracy and various other acts of violence, such as shootings at people and into homes.

Those defendants include Ryan Taybron, 22, of Hampton; Eric L. Nixon Jr., 22, of Newport News; Raymond Palmer, 30, of Newport News; and Geovanni Douglas, 24, of Newport News. They all face decades in prison under federal sentencing guidelines. (Taybron was acquitted of a charge of maintaining a drug premises, while Hunt was found not guilty in one shooting case).

The trial began Oct. 16, running four days a week, with one week off for Thanksgiving. Prosecutors presented dozens of trial witnesses and hundreds of trial exhibits.

Thirteen lawyers lined the front of the courtroom — four prosecutors, eight defense attorneys and another lawyer acting as a standby counsel for Doug-

las, who represented himself.

Defense lawyers argued that the case was weak — built largely on Facebook messages and witnesses looking for breaks on their own cases — rather than more solid evidence such as DNA, fingerprints and video footage.

The lawyers also contended that federal racketeering law didn’t apply to the young men who joined neighborhood gangs as they sought protection from a dangerous life in crime-ridden areas.

But the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Newport News asserted that a case built largely on witnesses looking for breaks in their own cases was not only legitimate — but necessary to break this street gang. They contended that the RICO law was tailor-made to go after the Bang Squad.

“The murders were no random acts of violence, rather they were the product of a deliberate effort of 36th Street Bang Squad to attack rivals and enhance the reputation of the gang,” U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia G. Zachary Terwilliger said in a news release after the verdict, calling the gang “violent and vicious.”

He thanked local police, investigators with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and his prosecution team for their efforts.

But the defense side was disappointed, except for Richardson’s acquittal on the murder count.

“We could have had a better day,” said Andrew Protogyrou, an attorney for defendant Ryan Taybron. “The jury worked hard, but

we are disappointed in the verdict as to the issue of RICO and applying it to these young men.”

“That had been something we had been trying to relay, but perhaps we didn’t do a good enough job,” he said. But Protogyrou said there are several “extremely strong issues for appeal.”

The 36th Street Bang Squad — also widely referred to as “Three-Six” — was centered at Marshall Courts and Seven Oaks. Those are two federally subsidized housing complexes on either side of 36th Street, between Madison and Wickham avenues, in Southeast Newport News.

Witnesses said the Bang Squad often clashed with Walker Village Murder Gang, based in an apartment complex on Madison Avenue south of 25th Street.

Trial evidence showed that members of both gangs engaged in retribution, flashed signs of disrespect to other gangs.

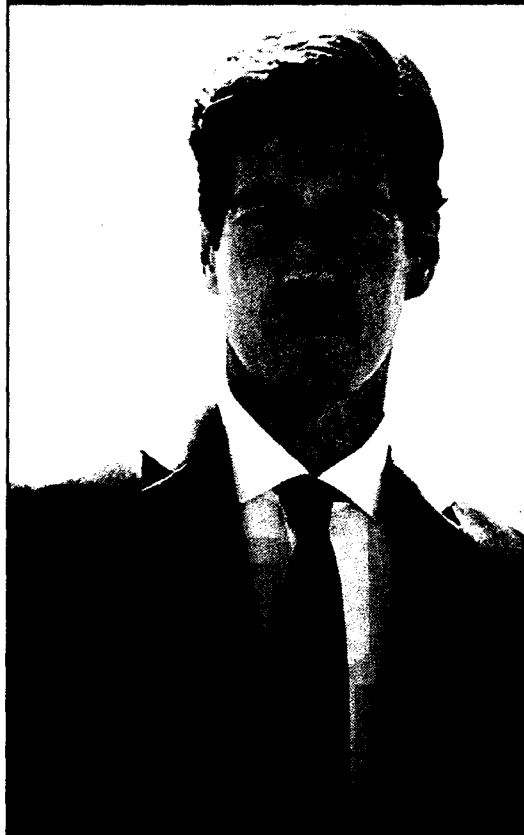
Latoya Wilson, Jada’s mother, said that her 13-year-old daughter was “a caring girl, always worried about everybody else,” and that it would bother her that the defendants’ mothers have to deal with their sons getting convicted and going to prison for decades.

“She would talk to them and forgive them and everything,” Wilson said of her daughter. But, she said, “I wanted justice for my baby so that me and my (other kids) can get healed.”

The seven defendants will be sentenced in May and June by U.S. District Judge Mark S. Davis

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