

Chicago Tribune

Friend describes slaying of Endia Martin at trial of shooting suspect's uncle

Chicago police investigate the fatal shooting of 14-year-old Endia Martin. (Eric Clark, for the Chicago Tribune)
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Lanekia Reynolds hesitated outside the glass doors of a Cook County courtroom Tuesday morning, looking overwhelmed until a prosecutor touched her arm and assured her she'd "be OK."

For the next hour, the slight teen with a child's voice publicly described for the first time how her best friend, 14-year-old cheerleader Endia Martin, was fatally shot in 2014 outside a Back of the Yards home by a 14-year-old girl they had both been friends with just a few years earlier.

Reynolds testified the shooting stemmed from a feud that began when she started talking to a boy her rival had dated in seventh grade. Both girls began provoking each other on social networks for two months leading up to Endia's death, she said.

Prosecutors played for jurors Tuesday a shaky cellphone video of the shooting in slow motion as Reynolds explained what was happening.

At one point Reynolds stood up in the witness stand, raising both hands in a firing stance as she demonstrated how the 14-year-old had fired three shots after threatening to kill her. Reynolds, the intended target, escaped with only a

graze wound to her left bicep, but Endia was shot in the back as she ran into their friend's home.

"It was a whole bunch of blood," Reynolds, now 18, said in a soft voice, fidgeting with a small package of tissues as she told jurors about seeing Endia on the kitchen floor of the house after the confrontation.



Family: Feud between longtime friends ends in killing of girl, 14

The testimony came at the trial of the shooting suspect's uncle, Donnell Flora, 27, who is charged with first-degree murder and attempted murder for allegedly giving his niece a silver .38-caliber revolver used to kill Endia and wound Reynolds. Flora is in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down after he was shot in the back in 2010.

The shooting suspect, whom the Tribune is not naming because she has been charged as a juvenile, is now 16 and has yet to stand trial.

In opening statements earlier Tuesday, Flora's lawyer, Patrycja Karlin, described him as being a father figure to his niece after the shooting suspect's own dad — Flora's brother — was fatally shot in 2009.

"He became her protector," Karlin said.

She said the girl asked Flora several times for a gun to take to the fight, but Flora refused. Before the fight, however, he agreed to go with her there by bus and took a gun himself, she said.

"He said, '... I will protect you in case one of those bullies has a weapon,'" Karlin told jurors.



Donnell Flora, uncle of the teen girl charged with fatally shooting 14-year-old Endia Martin in 2014, is accused of supplying his niece with the handgun that killed Endia. (Chicago Police Department)

But when they exited the bus, Flora realized he wouldn't be able to cross the grassy median of Garfield Boulevard in his wheelchair, Karlin said. He gave the gun to his niece but told her to give it to her aunt Vandetta Redwood.

Redwood, who is seen in the cellphone video, was charged with obstruction of justice and mob action after Endia's killing, but a judge threw out the charges a month later after watching the video.

Karlin said Redwood was to blame for Endia's death, handing the revolver back to the niece and telling her to "shoot the bitch."

"She was the grown-up, she was supposed to be the voice of reason. What did she do? She pressured (the girl) to pull the trigger," Karlin said.

But prosecutors said Flora agreed to provide a gun to his niece and watched from across the street as she killed Endia in cold blood.

"His actions went way beyond being irresponsible, way beyond not being a good role model," said Assistant State's Attorney Athena Farmakis. "He gave his 14-year-old niece a loaded handgun."

Emboldened by a "big gun" in the waistband of her khakis and backed by a "mob" carrying bats and metal poles, Farmakis said, the girl stood outside the home and repeatedly called out Reynolds.

By supplying the gun, Flora can be held responsible for Martin's murder and the attempted murder of Reynolds through the legal theory of accountability, Farmakis explained to jurors.

In her testimony Tuesday, Reynolds told jurors that she and the shooting suspect had agreed over Facebook to fight after school in April 2014 outside the home of one of Reynolds' friends in the 900 block of West Garfield Boulevard.

She and Endia were sitting on the porch still dressed in their school khakis when a group of up to 40 people with their rival at the front came to the house, Reynolds testified. Reynolds said she had expected a fistfight with the shooting suspect while a small group of female friends watched.

In the cellphone video, car horns can be heard honking as the large group, shouting and screaming, moves around a white minivan and a CTA bus on Garfield Boulevard.

The three girls had been friends in seventh grade, Reynolds testified, but ties dissolved a year later when Endia and the girl got into a fistfight.

"I didn't like her, she didn't like me," Reynolds said of the shooting suspect.

Endia and Reynolds went into the house, and one of three adults home at the time went outside to try to stop the fight. The shooting suspect stood at the gate, moving her hand around her waistband, Reynolds testified.

As Reynolds stepped outside, the girl with the gun tried to hit her on the head with the weapon but missed, Reynolds testified. She said she went back into the house, grabbed a combination lock tied to a dark piece of string and returned outside, Endia following her.

"I went out because she was calling me out, and I didn't want her to think that I was scared," Reynolds testified.

The video shows the shooting suspect raise the gun and start shooting while standing by a utility pole near the street as at least one adult tries to keep Reynolds apart from the group.

The girl then moves forward and continues shooting — at least one shot can be heard on the video — as everyone in the group runs away. Endia was behind Reynolds on the stairs when she was hit from behind.

Reynolds showed jurors the small scar on her left bicep where the bullet grazed her.

Endia's mother, Jonie Dukes, 41, testified briefly Tuesday, pausing for a long moment and putting her head in her hand when a prosecutor asked her how many of her four children were still alive.

Dukes said she last saw her daughter alive the morning she was killed, sleeping in her bed as Dukes left at 6 a.m. for her job as a certified nurse's assistant.

"I went in (her room) and touched her," Dukes said, telling jurors she next saw her daughter lying in a hospital bed.