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An Austin County jury found Maron Thomas, 24, guilty of Capital Murder on Thursday, June 28, 2013 after an hour and a half deliberation. The only two punishments possible for a defendant guilty of Capital Murder are the death penalty or life without parole. The Austin County District Attorney's Office sought the death penalty. The jury then heard punishment evidence and deliberated approximately seven hours before answering special issue questions that would determine Thomas's sentence. According to the jury's answers, Judge Steinhauser sentenced Maron Thomas to life without parole.

Thomas was accused of killing his mother, Debra Washington, stepfather George Washington, brother Cedric Thomas, sister Kiana Phearse, and two year old niece Khalilah Chambers-Massey in the Buckhorn area of Austin County on or about January 17, 2010.

The District Attorney's Office charged Maron Thomas with Capital Murder three different ways in three separate indictments arising from the killings. He was indicted for killing Cedric Thomas and Kiana Phearse in the same criminal transaction, killing Debra and George Washington in the same criminal transaction, and killing Khalilah Chambers-Massey, a child under the age of six.

The State proceeded on the indictment for the murder of Cedric Thomas and Kiana Phearse in this trial, and the other two indictments likely will remain open pending the outcome of his appeal.

Jury selection for the trial commenced on May 20, 2013, with 600 summonses sent to potential jurors. The jury selection process proceeded with individual interviews and lasted until June 12<sup>th</sup>. Such a lengthy jury selection process is common in cases where the State seeks the death penalty.

Wesley Mau, Assistant Attorney General, presented much of the evidence in the trial, along with Austin County District Attorney Travis Koehn and First Assistant District Attorney Brandy Davidson.

"Attorney General Greg Abbott offers a variety of assistance options for counties in complex prosecutions of serious crimes," Koehn said. "As my office only has three prosecutors, I requested the Attorney General's help so that I could vigorously prosecute this heinous crime while maintaining our regular misdemeanor and felony case loads."

The State presented over 200 exhibits and more than twenty witnesses over a trial that lasted more than two weeks. Thomas pled Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity. Thomas's defense focused on evidence that Thomas suffered from a mental disease or defect that prevented him from knowing his conduct was wrong.

Koehn added, "I'm extremely proud of the work of Assistant Attorney General Wes Mau, as well as my office and everyone who helped secure this guilty verdict. The Austin County Sheriff's Office, the Texas Rangers, and Department of Public Safety Crime Lab did an excellent job in this difficult case."

"Although we believed the death penalty was appropriate, we respect the jury's verdict. This defendant will die behind bars," Koehn stated.

The case marked the first time the death penalty had been sought in Austin County since the retrial of Billy George Hughes. Hughes was found guilty of capital murder for shooting a peace officer and was sentenced to death in 1976. His conviction was overturned on appeal, and he was retried and sentenced to death a second time in 1988. His execution was carried out in 2000.