

Beat: News

Los Angeles serial killer convicted of 4 more murders

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USPA News - A former pizza delivery man, who was previously convicted of killing 10 women and an unborn child in Los Angeles over an 11-year period starting in 1987, has been convicted of four additional murders during the same period, prosecutors said on Thursday. It took jurors less than a day of deliberations to find Chester Turner, 47, guilty of four counts of first-degree murder.

The jury also found special circumstances of multiple murders and prior murder convictions, making Turner eligible for the death penalty. The penalty phase of the trial is expected to begin on Friday morning. The latest victims were four women who were strangled to death in South Los Angeles between 1987 and 1997. They were identified as 33-year-old Elandra Bunn who was killed in June 1987, 28-year-old Deborah Williams who was killed in November 1992, 42-year-old Mary Edwards who was killed in December 1992, and 30-year-old Cynthia Annette Johnson who was killed in February 1997. Turner first became a murder suspect in September 2003 after a detective received a "cold hit" from the statewide DNA database known as CODIS. Turner, who underwent a mandatory DNA test following a conviction of rape in 2002, was linked through DNA evidence to the murders of 38-year-old Paula Vance in February 1998 and 45-year-old Mildred Beasley in November 1996. The detective who found the DNA match was the investigating officer in the murder case of Vance, whose assault near the rear loading area of an office building was captured on video by a surveillance camera. The investigating officer took the case with him when he was assigned to the Cold Case Homicide Unit at the Los Angeles Police Department, where he continued to investigate the murder. With Turner already in prison for his rape conviction, the LAPD continued their investigation through most of 2004 and was able to link him to eight additional murders. Two of those murders, of Williams and Edwards, had already been deemed solved, but further DNA testing proved David Allen Jones to be innocent. Jones, a former part-time janitor who is mentally retarded and has the mental capacity of an eight-year-old, had been convicted of the murders of Williams and Edwards even though physical evidence did not support his initial admissions that placed him at the crime scene and fighting with the victims. Jones was found guilty in 1995 and released in March 2004 when the court overturned the convictions. After Jones was quietly released from prison, Jones filed a damage claim against the City of Los Angeles for his wrongful conviction that led to his imprisonment lasting more than a decade. Jones was awarded \$720,000 in October 2006 after the City Council approved a settlement.

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