



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY PROSECUTOR

MERCER COUNTY
COURT HOUSE
P.O. BOX 8068

JOSEPH L. BOCCHINI, JR.
Prosecutor

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08650-0068
PHONE: (609) 989-6350
(609) 989-6305
FAX #: (609) 989-0161

JANETTA D. MARBREY
First Assistant Prosecutor

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CONTACT: Casey A. DeBlasio
(609) 989-6379

Two Trenton Men Sentenced to 13 Years in Prison for 2001 Murder

TRENTON – Two Trenton men pleaded guilty this afternoon to the 2001 shooting death of Charles “Minnesota Fats” Simmons, Mercer County Prosecutor Joseph L. Bocchini Jr. said.

Freddie Dean, 41, and Dionte Byrd, 34, each pleaded guilty to a charge of first-degree aggravated manslaughter before Mercer County Superior Court Judge Edward M. Neafsey.

Following the guilty plea, Neafsey sentenced Byrd and Dean to 13 years in prison each. Both defendants will be required to serve 85 percent of that sentence before they are eligible for parole. In addition, both Byrd and Dean will remain under parole supervision for a period of five years following their release from prison.

Simmons was killed by gunfire during a robbery at his Prospect Street apartment on August 26, 2001.

Dean and Byrd were found guilty of felony murder by a jury in 2004 but had their convictions overturned by a state appellate court in 2007 because a key witness against them did not testify in court. The state Supreme Court upheld that decision last year and a new trial was ordered.

Assistant Prosecutor Skylar Weissman represented the state.

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