



MICHAEL C. O'MALLEY
Cuyahoga County Prosecutor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 3, 2018

Jury Finds Brunson and Hollins Guilty for the Aggravated Murder of Cooley Lounge Bartender Melissa Brinker

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that a jury has found Nigel Brunson and Anita Hollins guilty for the aggravated murder of 44-year-old Melissa Brinker and the armed robbery of several patrons at the Cooley Lounge in Cleveland.

On October 24, 2016, Dana Thomas, 30, in the company of Brunson, 20, and Dwayne Sims, 21, went to the Cooley Lounge on West 130th St. at the behest of Anita Hollins, 44. Hollins held a grudge over an altercation that happened at the bar in August 2016. The customers involved in the altercation were charged, but later acquitted.

The three defendants—Thomas, Brunson, and Sims—entered the Cooley Lounge and sat down for a drink. After a few minutes, they ordered all the patrons to the ground and robbed them of their purses, wallets, and cell phones.

Melissa Brinker was working her shift as a bartender. She was ordered into the back office by Thomas, who shot her once. Brunson then went into the back room to check on her; when he noticed she was still alive, he shot her point blank and killed her.

“Anita Hollins and her gang of assassins went to the bar for one purpose: to execute another human being,” said Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley. “Sadly they succeeded in their mission, and for that they will pay for the rest of their lives.”

The three men and Anita Hollins decided to present their case before 12 jurors. Prior to trial, a fifth defendant, Garry Lake, 22, pled guilty to Robbery and served as a witness during the trial. After trial began, Sims admitted to his role in robbing the patrons and pled guilty to Aggravated

Robbery and Kidnapping, and Thomas elected to have his case tried before the Judge, who will announce her verdict at a later date.

The Jury found Brunson and Hollins guilty of 22 charges that include Aggravated Murder, Murder, Aggravated Robbery, Kidnapping, Aggravated Burglary, and Felonious Assault. Both defendants face a maximum sentence of Life Without the Possibility of Parole. Sentencing has not yet been scheduled.

Cleveland Police Department Homicide Detectives Kathleen Carlin and Timothy Entenok along with Third District Detective Aaron Reese conducted the investigation with assistance from the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office.

Contact: Ryan Miday, Director of Communications and Public Policy. Phone: 216.443.7488 or Email: rmiday@prosecutor.cuyahogacounty.us.