Kentucky Supreme Court upholds Ward's complicity to commit murder conviction

■ *By Mark White*

Alexandra Ward, who was convicted last year of complicity to commit murder and complicity to commit first-degree strangulation in the 2023 death of her three-year-old daughter Amoura Smallwood, will not be getting out of prison any time soon.

Last month, the Kentucky Supreme Court affirmed her conviction and life sentence.

Smallwood died on Feb. 19, 2023, from blunt force injuries to the head and body due to non-accidental injuries she suffered at the hands of Jordan Taylor, her mother's boyfriend, in whose care she had been left.

Ward had only known Taylor for weeks.

The medical examiner, who performed Smallwood's autopsy following her death, testified over 70 individual injuries were documented on the exterior of Smallwood's body during the autopsy.

Smallwood suffered multiple brain bleeds and her brain showed obvious signs of swelling even after her death.

Taylor pleaded guilty to murder, first-degree sodomy and first-degree strangulation in October 2024, and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Ward took her chances with a jury trial in late March 2025.

Text messages between Ward and Taylor from the timeframe in which Smallwood was being abused were presented to jurors during the trial. Those texts detailed a variety of violent threats by Taylor toward both Ward and Smallwood.

"I'm going to beat your…," read one text sent to Ward from Taylor on Feb. 5, 2023. "I will leave this whole house a crime scene," read another text from Taylor on the same day.

Two days later, Ward left her child alone with Taylor for the first time while she went to work.

On Feb. 11, 2023, Taylor sent Ward a series of text messages concerning her children, including: "Come get these." "I can't take this today." "I've had them all day."

Ward responded: "They be alright til I'm done."

During a text conversation between Taylor and Ward on Feb. 17, 2023, Ward wrote, "We're never gonna get rid of the marks." Additional phone data showed on the same day, Ward searched for how to get bruises to go away fast and how to get scratches to go away fast multiple times.

Following the trial, the jury deliberated for a little under an hour before convicting Ward of complicity to commit murder and complicity to commit first-degree strangulation in Smallwood's death. Jurors recommended a sentence of life in prison.

Under Kentucky's sentencing guidelines, Ward will be parole eligible after serving 85 percent of her sentence or after serving 20 years, whichever comes first.

Appeal filed

Ward appealed her conviction raising three issues of what she claimed to be trial error. First, she argued the trial court abused its discretion by denying her motion to exclude allegedly prejudicial evidence of Smallwood's injuries, rendering the proceeding fundamentally unfair. She also argued the trial court erred by denying her motion to exclude photos and video of Taylor abusing Ward.

Taylor recorded video of himself two days before Smallwood's death showing him covering Smallwood's mouth and nose with his hand for 39 seconds to smother her.

The Supreme Court's ruling noted the trial court admitted only 21 of the 300 photographs the commonwealth had available. Each image showed the jury something the others did not. The video depicted the strangulation, which no other evidence in the case established.

"The trial court did not abuse its discretion in admitting either the videos or photos," the memorandum opinion of the court stated.

Second, Ward asserted the trial court erred in allowing the prosecution to introduce incriminating text messages between Ward and Taylor. She claimed the messages were "not authenticated" and admitted "without a declarant" violating her constitutional right to confront her accusers.

She argued the text messages were not authenticated because the prosecution did not call Ward and Taylor as witnesses to authenticate the content and context of the messages.

The Supreme Court noted in its memorandum of opinion this argument mispresents Kentucky's rule on authenticating evidence. It found the trial court did not abuse its discretion in admitting the text messages.

Third, Ward argued the trial court erred in denying her change-of-venue request. In high profile criminal court cases, it is not uncommon for a defendant to ask for their trial to be moved to another county arguing pretrial publicity prevents them from finding unbiased jurors and receiving a fair trial.

"Ward bore the burden of showing that public opinion in Whitley County was so aroused that she could not receive a fair trial. She failed to meet that burden. The trial court, present in the county and best positioned to gauge the community's sentiment, concluded that a fair trial was possible," the Supreme Court wrote in its memorandum of opinion. The trial court asked prospective jurors if they had heard anything about Ward's case. Six jurors indicated they had but said they had not formed an opinion based on their exposure to the case and could base their opinion solely on the evidence presented at trial.

The Supreme Court affirmed the judgment of the Whitley Circuit Court in its Oct. 22 memorandum of opinion.

Ward,, who is now 23, is currently incarcerated at Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women. She is classified as a medium security inmate. She is eligible to meet with the parole board on May 4, 2043, according to a Kentucky Department of Corrections website.

Taylor, who is now 26, is currently incarcerated at the Kentucky State Penitentiary. He is classified as a maximum security inmate with no parole eligibility date due to his sentence of life without the possibility of parole.

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Whitley County Clerk

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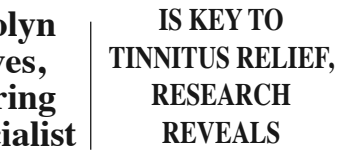
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MINDFULNESS IS KEY TO TINNITUS RELIEF, RESEARCH REVEALS

New research has found that a new mindfulness-based approach to tinnitus could transform the treatment of the condition.

The research found that Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) helps to significantly reduce the severity of tinnitus compared to relaxation-based treatments, an approach recommended by many tinnitus clinics.

Tinnitus is described as a sensation or awareness of sound that is not caused by an external sound source. Approximately 1 in 100 people are very distressed or disabled by it and as many as 1 in 20 people are at least moderately distressed by it. Tinnitus is associated with complaints of emotional stress, insomnia, auditory perceptual problems and concentration problems.

As yet there is no treatment to stop the tinnitus noise but this research, funded by the British Tinnitus Association (BTA), shows clearly that treatment can make it less severe, intrusive and bothersome.

The researchers compared MBCT to relaxation therapy, a traditional treatment for people with chronic tinnitus, to determine if MBCT was a better option than the current recommended practice.

In total, 75 patients took part in the trial, receiving either MBCT or relaxation therapy. The study found that both treatments led to a reduction in tinnitus severity, psychological distress, anxiety and depression for patients.

However, the MBCT treatment led to significantly greater reductions in tinnitus severity than the relaxation treatment, and this improvement lasted longer.

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Community & Church Announcements

Send us your community announcements — Email: society@corbinnewsjournal.com | Fax: 606.528.9779

All announcements sent in must include a phone number for verification or questions. QR codes will not be included or scanned for the information

Community announcements will be ran for two weeks. Support group and other non-profit services will run one time during the month. Deadline is Monday at noon.

SEKSPA will be hosting a Sheep Vaccination Protocol Workshop on Thursday, November 5th at 6pm at the Whitley County Cooperative Extension Office, 4275 N. Hwy. 25W in Goldbug. Log on to ukywhitley.pacecommunity.net to register or call 606.549.1430 for more information.

Whitley County Cooperative Extension will be hosting a Swap Meet, Friday November 6th, from 5pm-9m. It will be at the Whitley County Cooperative Extension Office, 4275 N. Hwy. 25W in Goldbug. Discover vintage treasures and great deals from local vendors. Call 606.549.1430 for more information.

The Corbin Senior Citizens Center offers a free lunch for those 60 years or older on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, lunch is served at 11:00 am. The center is open from 8:00 am - 12:30 pm. The center is located at 409 Barbourville Street in Corbin. For more info call 606.528.0100.

Disabled American Veterans Chapter 90 1t will have service officers, Jimmy Haun and Randy Pollin at the DAV located at 100 Briar Creek Park Road in Williamsburg, KY on the first Tuesday of every month from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm.

Al-anon Family Group Meetings will be held every Tuesday at 6 pm at the Saint John's Episcopal Church and every Friday at 12 pm at the Corbin Presbyterian Church on Master Street. Please enter through the back door.

The Corbin Community Backpack Program an ordinary house, extraordinary impact fighting food insecurity. Each week we pack 1,100 bags of food to make sure kids have something to eat over the weekend. These children ranging from K-12th grade in the Knox, Whitley and Corbin School systems. If you would like to help make a tax deductible donation you can find us on Paypal, Venmo or you may mail a donation to PO Box 1891 Corbin, KY 40702. For more information or to volunteer contact Mike Lewis 606.524.3824.

Corbin Middle School will be having their Site Based Decision Meeting on November 12, 2026 at 3:30pm in the media center at Corbin Middle School.

Williamsburg Gospel Barn invites you to our Veterans Day Celebration on Saturday, November 7th at 6 PM. Featuring John Westling of Greenville, TN, from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Speakers include veterans David Newsome and veteran Thomas Corder of McCreary County, KY. Open mic begins at 5 PM.

Whitley County Public Library will host Ms. Betty's Toddler Story Time every Friday beginning at 10 am for ages one through four. Nov. 6th - The Leaf Thief; Nov. 13th - The Wonky Donkey; Nov. 20th - The Very Stuffed Turkey; Nov. 27th - Library is closed for Thanksgiving.

Briar Creek Cemetery is seeking donations for their Perpetual Care Fund. If you would like to contribute for the upkeep of the cemetery send your donation to: Briar Creek Cemetery, PO BOX 696, Williamsburg, KY 40769.

Vehicle show and silent auction at Kentucky Splash Waterpark parking lot on Saturday, November 7th from 11 am until 2 pm to benefit 10 year old Mason Capp. For more information call Becky Marcum at 606.304.4156.

Coonhunting for a cause on November 7th. This is a benefit for Junior Angel and his family. There will be raffles, food and more. It will be held at Patterson Creek Volunteer Fire Department at 4088 KY-904 in Williamsburg. For more information call 606.304.0037 or 606.304.3906.

Williamsburg City Hall will be closed Wednesday, November 11th in honor of Veteran's Day. Sanitation will run on schedule.

The 2026 Whitley County Dumpster Program will be held on November 5, 6 and 7 at Corbin Speedway located on 6194, Hwy 25. A crew will be present from 8 am - 3 pm to help with unloading. Tires, shingles and hazardous materials such as batteries, paint and chemicals will not be accepted. For bulk disposal and Whitley County residents only. No after hours dumping.

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