

TEEN INDICTED FOR FIRST-DEGREE MURDER IN MOORHEAD GIRL'S DEATH

NEWS FARGO

Jury finds gunman not guilty in fatal shooting outside north Fargo bar

The defense argued that Raymond Gunn acted in self-defense and during trial suggested a "stand your ground" law passed last year by the North Dakota Legislature should apply in Gunn's case, despite it going into effect just days after the shooting.



Raymond Gunn is hugged by his defense attorneys Tracy Hines and Nicole Bredahl, left, after jurors delivered a not guilty verdict in his murder trial in Cass County District Court on Monday, March 28, 2022. David Samson / The Forum

**By C.S. Hagen**

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FARGO — A jury found Raymond Christopher Gunn not guilty of murder after about nine hours of deliberation over two days.

Jurors started deliberating shortly before noon Friday, March 25, and resumed Monday. The verdict was announced at about 1 p.m. Monday in Cass County District Court.

Gunn's attorney, Nicole Bredahl, argued that her client acted in self-defense and during trial suggested a "stand your ground" law passed last year by the North Dakota Legislature should apply in Gunn's case, despite it going into effect just days after the shooting.

The law now eliminates a duty to retreat in dangerous situations, but it doesn't apply to the person who initiates or provokes said danger.

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During the four-day trial, prosecutor Renata Olafson Selzer argued that Gunn was the initial aggressor and provoked danger.

Gunn, 40, faced a sentence of up to life in prison if convicted of killing 41-year-old Eric Woodrow Hayes around 11 p.m. July 24 in the Loaf 'N Jug parking lot at 1201 N. University Drive in Fargo, across the street from North Dakota State University.

"We are so happy for Raymond that he is finally able to go home," said Tracy Hines, one of his defense attorneys.

Bredahl said Gunn's response to the jury's finding was "a lot of shock, happiness," and that they've all had a long eight months waiting for the not guilty verdict.

Bredahl said Gunn has been consistent with his story the entire time. "He only used lethal force when his life depended on it," she said.



Raymond Gunn appears in Cass County District Court with his attorney Tracy Hines during his trial Thursday, March 24, 2022. Chris Flynn / The Forum

Now, Gunn, who has no previous criminal record and spent the last eight months behind bars, must begin life anew. He lost his job as a supply driver for a local hospital, but for now he plans to "have a good meal" and will spend time with his family, some of whom attended the trial, Bredahl said.

When asked if the verdict surprised her, Hines said: "We see it differently living it day in and day out and it could have gone either way."

Before the trial, Bredahl suggested Hayes pulled a knife on Gunn on July 24 and called him a racial slur. Gunn is Black, and Hayes was Caucasian.

The prosecution objected to the defense presenting evidence at trial suggesting Hayes used a slur, calling it irrelevant to the case.

The jury that decided the case appeared to be all white.



Surveillance footage played at the trial of Raymond Gunn. Chris Flynn / The Forum

The night of the shooting, Gunn and his friend, Jerod Robinson, went to the Bison Turf, a bar and grill just north of the Loaf ‘N Jug gas station, to play pool. Gunn brought his legally owned handgun, two full magazine clips and handcuffs with him, police said. Gunn and Robinson ran into Hayes in the alley between the bar and gas station. Surveillance video recorded their interaction.

After what was initially seen on the video to be a friendly interaction, [violence soon erupted](https://www.inforum.com/news/fargo/jury-begins-deliberation-in-murder-trial-of-man-accused-of-shooting-near-ndsu)(<https://www.inforum.com/news/fargo/jury-begins-deliberation-in-murder-trial-of-man-accused-of-shooting-near-ndsu>) between Gunn and Hayes, who Selzer said had meth in his system.

Gunn and Hayes showed each other their weapons several times, including once when Hayes pulled out his knife and set it on the

ground. Gunn and Robinson returned the weapon to Hayes, who sheathed it in his belt under his shirt.

In the surveillance video, Hayes and Gunn went off camera several times, and the group went into the camera's blind spot for about 14 seconds.

Then, Hayes appeared in parking lot video backing up with his hands in the air as Gunn, pointing his gun at Hayes, approached him. The defense claimed Hayes tried to grab Gunn's firearm from his hip.

The men went off camera again in front of the bar before Gunn walked away into the alley. Robinson was seen talking with Hayes by a vehicle in front of the gas station.

Robinson told police Hayes drew his knife, but video wasn't clear enough to back that claim. Detectives said there is no evidence to suggest Hayes redrew his knife.

Gunn returned to confront Hayes with Robinson. Gunn and Robinson appeared to back Hayes against a vehicle.

Robinson told authorities he was trying to convince Hayes to put his knife away, adding that he was scared. Robinson left, and video appears to show Gunn pistol-whipping Hayes.

That's when Hayes pursued Gunn. With his gun pointed at Hayes, Gunn backed up around the vehicle, fell backward and shot Hayes.

Gunn stayed at the scene and gave aid to Hayes, who died at a hospital. Gunn surrendered to police at the scene.

During the trial, prosecutors said Gunn and Hayes could have walked away multiple times.



Eric Woodrow Hayes, 41, of Fargo, left, was killed in a June 24, 2021. He is pictured here with his fiancée, Kristie Janssen. Submitted photo

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By **C.S. Hagen**(<https://www.inforum.com/c-s-hagen>)

C.S. Hagen is an award-winning journalist investigating true crime with The Vault mainly in North Dakota and Minnesota.

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