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DORCHESTER MAN GUILTY IN MURDER OF WOMAN FOUND DEAD AND BURNED

BROCKTON – A Dorchester man has been convicted for his role in the murder of a woman found dead and burned in Bridgewater, Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz has announced.

After a 7-day trial, a jury deliberated 10 hours before finding Fernando Owens, 51, guilty of one count each of First Degree Murder and Aggravated Kidnapping.

On November 3, 2015, Bridgewater Police received a 911 call just before midnight for a report of a fire burning alongside MBTA train tracks. Police determined it to be a human body on fire and it was later identified as 29 year-old Ashley Bortner of New Jersey. Bortner's body had been burned over 70%, she had been gagged, and her face was wrapped with a towel. Bortner's hands and feet were also bound behind her.

Massachusetts State Police investigators determined and jurors heard at trial evidence that Owens was acquainted with the victim and believed she somehow played a role in the Suffolk County murder of Owens's son. As part of the investigation, Massachusetts State Police seized an electrical cord and a cotton towel from the home of Owens that linked him to the murder.

Shortly after the murder, Owens fled the United States to the Dominican Republic, but was captured by authorities there.

Co-defendants Julian Squires, 48, and Shannon Squires, 46, were additionally charged for their roles in Bortner's murder. The Squires were in Bridgewater around the time of the 911 call to Bridgewater Police and assisted Owens in killing and disposing of Bortner's body. Julian Squires is currently serving a mandatory sentence of life in prison. Shannon Squires is next scheduled to appear in court on July 20.

Owens will be sentenced on Friday at 10 a.m. in Plymouth Superior Court. Assistant District Attorney Cailin Campbell prosecuted the case, which was investigated by Massachusetts State Police, Boston Police, Bridgewater Police, and the MBTA Transit Police.

