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## Detective may face investigation after testifying for homicide suspects

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By Gabrielle Banks, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A mother's attempt to help her son defend himself against homicide charges backfired in court yesterday when a city police detective contradicted himself on the witness stand and now faces an investigation by the district attorney's office.

The turn of events occurred during a hearing yesterday for Joseph Hall, 19, of Penn Hills, and co-defendant Lamont Hall, 20, of East Liberty. The two men are charged with gunning down high school student James Stubbs, 17, in a 2006 drive-by near Westinghouse High School. The co-defendants are not related.

After two mistrials, the co-defendants were back before Allegheny County Judge David R. Cashman this week to present new evidence.

Though Joseph Hall's lawyer, T. Brent McCune, filed the motion for an evidentiary hearing to explore evidence that might clear his client, Mr. Hall's mother, Cecilia Coleman, has pursued her own avenues to try to exonerate her son.

She located a new witness who introduced an alternative shooter and has a personal connection to a city police officer who also testified this week for the defense.

Pittsburgh police Detective Talib Kevin Ghafoor, a family friend of Ms. Coleman's, testified Monday that he'd learned from Officer George Edwards, who responded to the scene, that witnesses said the shooter was on foot and not in a car as the co-defendants were alleged to have been.

However, Officer Edwards testified he never told Detective Ghafoor anything like that and that he was speaking about a different case.

Under cross-examination, Detective Ghafoor also said he did not recall having contact with Joseph Hall at the county jail or giving him legal advice.

However, over two days in court, Daniel Fitzsimmons, chief trial deputy for the district attorney, played several audio recordings of conversations between Detective Ghafoor, Ms. Coleman and the defendant at the jail in which the policeman -- identifying himself by the nickname G-Force -- tells Joseph Hall that he should be let out of jail soon and "It's over, believe me, it's over. The state has nothing to stand on." He says officials "will pay for every second that you're in here." He also is heard advising him "not to sign anything."

The detective nodded in agreement yesterday, as he listened to his own taped statements. And, with five homicide detectives and the head of the district attorney's homicide unit looking on, Detective Ghafoor admitted that he did participate in the jail

phone calls, help prepare the defense of the case and was "aligned with both defendants."

The detective, who is black, also admitted he used a racial epithet in one phone call to refer to a school police officer who had a stroke on the witness stand, causing the first mistrial.

After yesterday's testimony, Mike Manko, the district attorney's office spokesman, said they'd decided to examine the calls and court records to determine if Detective Ghafoor committed any crimes.

Judge Cashman also heard new testimony this week from Rayna Talliferro, 23, who testified Monday that someone named "Nitty" came up to her at a convenience store and claimed he killed the victim and "wanted Joe Hall to take a rap for it."

Judge Cashman will rule today on whether any of the evidence is admissible.

Ms. Coleman has filed a complaint about the city officers who investigated the homicide with Office of Municipal Investigations, which she said is pending.

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