



# Local News

clarionledger.com  
The Clarion-Ledger ■ REAL MISSISSIPPI

Search Metro Jackson:

Find what you need with our New Search!

ADVERTISEMENTS

Order 7 Day Delivery  
Get a Free Gift  
Subscribe Now



ADVERTISEMENT

[Click Here](#)

January 5, 2007

## New trial for teen convicted of murder

- Tyler Edmonds' half-sister sentenced to death in 2003 slaying

By Jerry Mitchell  
[jmitchell@clarionledger.com](mailto:jmitchell@clarionledger.com)



Edmonds

A teenager who went to prison at 13 and wouldn't have been eligible to leave until he was 65 will get a second chance to convince jurors he didn't help his half-sister murder her husband.

The Mississippi Supreme Court ordered a new trial Thursday for Tyler Edmonds, sentenced to life in prison for the shooting death of Joey Fulgham.

"It's a tremendous relief," said Jim Waide of Tupelo, the attorney for the now 16-year-old. "The bottom line is the court said he didn't get a fair trial."

Defense lawyers had argued Edmonds was influenced to falsely confess to assisting in the crime by his half-sister, Kristi Fulgham, who was sentenced to death in December for killing her estranged husband in 2003 in Starkville.

Prosecutors said Edmonds had confessed to officers and to others. "We're just devastated for Joey's family," said Assistant District Attorney Frank Clark. "They're entitled to closure."

ADVERTISEMENT

Miss a day. Miss a lot.

**"A year of the Sunday paper only costs  
h...h?"**

**SUNDAY ONLY  
52 WEEKS  
FOR \$52**

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS](#)



## WHAT'S NEXT

Thursday's ruling by the state Supreme Court means Tyler Edmonds, 16, will get a new trial in the 2003 slaying of Joey Fulgham in Starkville. Edmonds, who had been serving a life sentence in prison, could be released on bond. Defense attorneys may seek a change of venue.

The ruling means "12 more jurors will hear the same evidence," he said.

The case attracted national attention because of Edmonds' age when he was charged and because a conviction meant he would be in prison until he reached retirement age. CourtTV, CBS' 48 Hours and local television stations were not allowed to videotape his trial.

Last January, the state Court of Appeals ruled Edmonds wasn't entitled to a new trial. One of those judges wrote: "Tyler lacks the capacity to vote, drive, get married, enter into a contract or drop out of school; however, because he is faced with such a grievous charge he

is automatically not afforded the protections of the Youth Court Act."

State Rep. George Flaggs Jr., D-Vicksburg, has introduced a bill that would give juveniles the same rights and privileges as adults.

Under this bill, "no juvenile testimony can be taken and used without a parent, guardian or lawyer present because children are not mature enough to be interrogated," he said. "There are so many others being sentenced for the same reason as Tyler. I'm not trying to be soft on crime. I'm trying to be fair. Everybody is innocent until proven guilty - poor, rich, black or white, Republican or Democrat."

In 2006, Flaggs introduced a similar bill which passed the House but stalled in the Senate.

In the majority decision, Presiding Justice Bill Waller Jr. wrote that Circuit Judge James T. Kitchens Jr. erred in allowing testimony of a "two-shooter theory almost to the exclusion of a single-shooter theory."

Dr. Stephen Hayne testified that the positioning of the weapon led him to believe that two people had pulled the trigger.

Waller said such testimony was beyond Hayne's area of expertise.

The justices held the defense should have been allowed to show jurors a video of the appearance of the estranged couple on The Montel Williams Show.

On the show, Kristi Fulgham admitted having an affair with her husband's best friend and then having his friend's child.

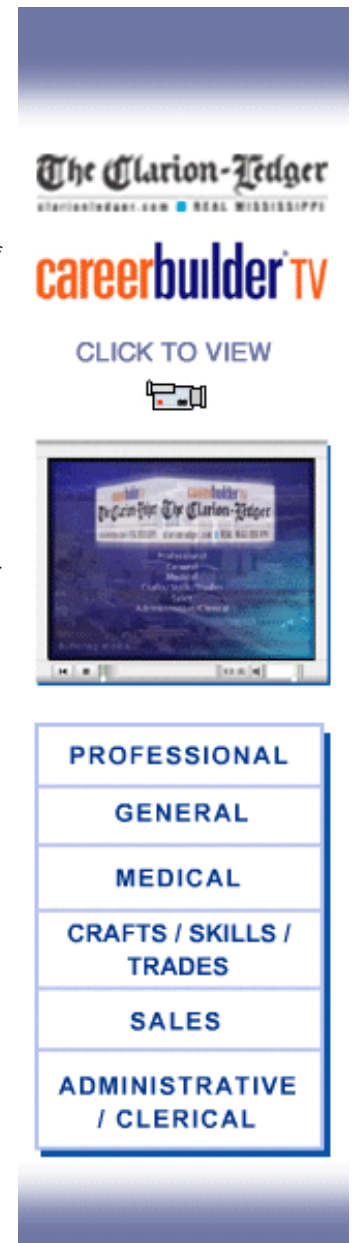
Kristi Fulgham told Williams that her husband often told her she would "burn in hell," and Joey Fulgham admitted they fought on a daily basis.

Asked why they stayed together, Joey Fulgham replied, "I love her. I mean, I really do. She messed up, big. I mean, tremendously big. I only throw it up in her face mainly when we got in big arguments."

How often is that? Williams asked.

"Daily," Joey Fulgham replied.



While the video could have prejudiced Kristi Fulgham in her trial, it would not prejudice Edmonds, Waller wrote. "Exclusion of this highly relevant evidence was an abuse of discretion. We have long held that such evidence is relevant to show a



The Clarion-Ledger  
CLARIONLEDGER.COM ■ REAL MISSISSIPPI

**careerbuilder**TV

CLICK TO VIEW



PROFESSIONAL
GENERAL
MEDICAL
CRAFTS / SKILLS / TRADES
SALES
ADMINISTRATIVE / CLERICAL

person's motive to kill."

The high court, however, sided with the judge's decision to exclude expert testimony by the defense on how some people can give false confessions.

With lawyers looking toward a new trial, Waide said he may seek a change of venue because "everybody will know he's been convicted before. That's what will do us harm."

It's possible, too, prosecutors could offer another plea bargain.

District Attorney Forrest Allgood told The Commercial Dispatch of Columbus that the defense turned down a plea deal that would have allowed Edmonds to serve 12 years in prison.

Waide said he didn't recall such an offer. He said his only recollection was a prosecutor's remark that a deal could only be made if Edmonds admitted his confession was true, "so we never got off first base."

Oktibbeha County Sheriff Dolph Bryan said, before Edmonds went on trial, he heard prosecutors had offered the youth a plea deal.

Bryan said he urged Edmonds to consider the offer. "I know how strong the case is against him, and I didn't think he needed to go to trial," he said.

 [Send this link to a friend.](#) |  [Join our forums.](#) |  [Send a letter to the editor.](#)

 [Subscribe to The Clarion-Ledger.](#)

[Jobs: CareerBuilder.com](#) - [Cars: Cars.com](#) - [Apartments: Apartments.com](#) - [Shopping: ShopLocal.com](#)

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#)  
and [Privacy Policy](#), updated June 7, 2005.

©2006 The Clarion-Ledger

