

# Court-appointed attorney removed from Pasco murder case after suspect files motion

By Kristin M. Kraemer

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Kenyatta K.E. Bridges is escorted into Franklin County Superior Court in December 2014.

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A defense lawyer was removed from a Pasco murder case Friday after his client filed a motion claiming a court-appointed attorney is obliged to lie.

Kenyatta K.E. Bridges's trial was to begin Monday , but that won't happen now that a new attorney must get up to speed on the 3-month-old case.

Judge Carrie Runge closed the courtroom to the public for 15 minutes while she listened to the concerns of Bridges and his lawyer Scott Johnson. Then, once back in open court, Runge ruled it was best to release Johnson from the case.

“The court has found that it will be a conflict (of interest) for Mr. Johnson to continue as your attorney,” she told Bridges.

Bridges is charged in the Dec. 3 fatal shooting of a 22-year-old man in the Stonegate Apartments parking lot.

Prosecutors allege he was involved in luring Lorenzo “Richie” Fernandez Jr. to the scene, was armed with a gun as Fernandez was killed — though he did not fire any shots — and fled with the suspected shooter.

Charges against Bridges were amended earlier this week in Franklin County Superior Court to include first-degree murder while he or an accomplice was armed with a deadly weapon; conspiracy; and second-degree unlawful possession of a gun.

He has been in jail since his Christmas day arrest in Spokane.

His wife, Mary A. Faucett, is accused of getting the victim’s phone number hours before his death and later calling the man under the guise she wanted to hook up with him. Her trial is March 25.

The case against DeShawn I. Anderson — who’s charged with killing Fernandez and shooting up a car full of people weeks earlier — has been on hold while he underwent an evaluation over concerns he may be developmentally disabled.

Bridges described himself as the “alleged accused” and a “layman” in his motion, which was filed with the Franklin County Clerk’s Office late Thursday morning. The two-page, handwritten document was titled, “Motion to dismiss for lack of jurisdiction and fraud, and without courts appointed attorney who is compelled to lie.”

Johnson said he learned of the motion Friday morning as he was preparing to spend the whole day in court arguing pretrial motions in preparation for Monday’s trial.

Johnson asked Runge to close the hearing because anything he has discussed with his client is “protected information that shouldn’t be publicly disclosed.”

Johnson said that forcing them to divulge their reasons in a public setting would violate attorney-client privilege and prejudice Bridges.

The Herald objected on the record to the courtroom being closed to the public.

Bridges initially told Runge he was OK with the brief closure, then said, “Everybody could stay. I’m good with that. ... I have no objections.”

Johnson then talked quietly to his client, and Bridges changed his mind, saying “Yeah, we can close it.” Johnson added that Bridges had wanted his family to be able to stay in the courtroom, but his attorney advised “it’s all or nothing.”

Bridges’ mother asked if she had to leave because it is her son and she needs to see what’s going on. Runge said it would only be for a short time so she could understand Bridges’ motion, then the courtroom would reopen to the public.

In his motion, Bridges called the state of Washington a “fictitious plaintiff” because to have “a criminal case there must be a bonafied (sic) contract. No contract, no case, no plaintiff. Case is a fraud.”

He said the Supreme Court should have original jurisdiction.

The motion also twice stated, “The Blackman is God!”

Bridges was referring to Allah’s Five Percenters or Nation of Gods and Earths. The group, founded about 50 years ago, reportedly teaches that black people are the original people of the planet and, instead of believing in a mystery God, that the “Blackman” is God and his proper name is Allah.

Bridges likely will get another court-appointed attorney, unless his family can hire someone.

On Friday, lawyer Alexandria Sheridan with the bicounty Office of Public Defense said they asked Shane Silverthorn of Ellensburg if he could take the case.

Sheridan got a call from Silverthorn during the hearing and returned to the courtroom to say he is not available because he is handling a number of homicide cases both in Kittitas County and Benton County.

Sheridan cannot take the assignment, and Shelley Ajax is representing co-defendant Anderson.

The Office of Public Defense only has four attorneys under contract for the homicide defense panel, so Sheridan said indigent defense coordinator Eric Hsu will have to find another lawyer after he returns to the office Tuesday.

A status hearing will be scheduled later next week to set new hearing dates.

Bridges’ bail remains at \$500,000.

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