

**STATE OF WISCONSIN                      CIRCUIT COURT      MILWAUKEE COUNTY**

**STATE OF WISCONSIN**

**Plaintiff,**

**DA Case No.: 2023ML005050**

**Court Case No.:**

vs.

**CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

HOWZE, CORDELL M  
1633 TONYA TRAIL  
NEENAH, WI 54956  
DOB: 10/26/1989

**Defendant(s).**

*For Official Use*

THE BELOW NAMED COMPLAINANT BEING DULY SWORN, ON INFORMATION AND BELIEF STATES THAT:

**Count 1: FIRST DEGREE RECKLESS HOMICIDE, HABITUAL CRIMINALITY REPEATER, USE OF A DANGEROUS WEAPON**

The above-named defendant on or about Sunday, February 26, 2023, at 5301 North 29th Street, #5, in the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, did recklessly cause the death of Cashay Henderson, another human being, under circumstances which showed utter disregard for human life, contrary to sec. 940.02(1), 939.50(3)(b), 939.62(1)(c), 939.63(1)(b) Wis. Stats.

Upon conviction for this offense, **a Class B Felony**, the defendant may be sentenced to a term of imprisonment not to exceed sixty (60) years.

And further, invoking the provisions of sec. 939.62(1)(c) Wis. Stats., because the defendant is a repeater, having been convicted of at least one felony during the five year period immediately preceding the commission of this offense, which remains of record and unreversed, the maximum term of imprisonment for this offense **may be increased by not more than 6 years**, if the prior conviction was a felony.

And further, invoking the provisions of sec. 939.63(1)(b) Wis. Stats., because the defendant committed this offense while using a dangerous weapon, the maximum term of imprisonment for the felony **may be increased by not more than 5 years**.

**Count 2: POSSESSION OF A FIREARM BY A FELON, HABITUAL CRIMINALITY REPEATER**

The above-named defendant on or about Sunday, February 26, 2023, at 5301 North 29th Street, #5, in the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, did possess a firearm, having been convicted of a felony in this state, contrary to sec. 941.29(1m)(a), 939.50(3)(g), 939.62(1)(b) Wis. Stats.

Upon conviction for this offense, **a Class G Felony**, the defendant may be fined not more than Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000), or imprisoned not more than ten (10) years, or both.

And further, invoking the provisions of sec. 939.62(1)(b) Wis. Stats., because the defendant is a repeater, having been convicted of at least one felony during the five year period immediately preceding the commission of this offense, which remains of record and unreversed, the maximum term of imprisonment for this offense may be increased by not more than 4 years, if the prior conviction was a felony.

**Probable Cause:**

Complainant is a City of Milwaukee Police Officer and bases this complaint upon review of Milwaukee Police Reports, as well as police reports and statements of police officers from the Neenah Police Department, the Menasha Police Department, and the Fox Crossing Police Department, as well as complainant's own involvement in this investigation. Those reports and that investigation revealed the following:

**First Response and Scene Investigation**

On Sunday, February 26th 2023, at approximately 9:21am, Milwaukee Fire Department Engine 37, red shift, commanded by Captain Jeffery Callum, were dispatched to 5301 N. 29<sup>th</sup> Street, City and County of Milwaukee regarding a structure fire at the location. Upon arrival, Fire Department personnel observed that Apartment #5 was on fire and forced entry, the entire main room was thick with smoke and was actively on fire. After the fire was extinguished and the apartment was vented, the Milwaukee Fire Department discovered a victim, later determined to be the above named victim Cashay Henderson, unconscious and not breathing. Affiant notes that the victim is a transgendered woman. The victim was removed from the residence and observed to have suffered a possible gunshot wound to the left cheek area. At this time, they requested the Milwaukee Police Department and upgraded the call to a shooting.

Complaint is further based upon the statement of City of Milwaukee Detective Alex Klabunde, who conducted a scene investigation at 5301 N. 29<sup>th</sup> Street, Apartment #5. Detective Klabunde noted there was a front entrance to the building located at the center of the eastern exterior wall, with a **rear entrance** located at the center of the western exterior wall. A stairwell to the second floor was located immediately west of the front entrance, against the southern hallway wall. Apartment #5 was located at the southeast corner of the second floor of this building.

Upon entering the main entrance of the building, broken dry wall was located on the floor and stairs. Detective Klabunde observed blood on the northern staircase wall and on the main entrance's southern door frame. He further observed that the hallway drywall of the northern exterior wall of apartment wall had been almost completely removed. The damage appeared to be consistent with actions taken by the fire department.

There was an empty fire extinguisher cabinet at the western end of the first floor hallway.

Detective Klabunde noted that the entry door to apartment #5 was located near the northwest corner of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor hallway. Upon entering this door, one entered a hallway that turned south into the living room of the apartment. The hallway appeared to have heavy smoke damage. The living room had access to the kitchen at the west end of the living room, and a half-wall divided these two spaces. This room also appeared to have heavy smoke damage. This is the area where the victim's body was recovered. A portion of this ceiling had been removed, consistent with damage created by the fire department. Property in this room was in a state of disarray. A table was standing on end and a glass terrarium was observed near the southeast corner of the room. **A deceased snake** was observed between the upturned table and the glass terrarium. Wood shavings were scattered over the floor, and a yellow powder was visible on the floor. This powder was covered by wood shavings in some places. These shavings appeared to originate from the upturned table, which had a terrarium on the top of it.

A bedroom was located at the southeast corner of the apartment, with access from the living room. There was less smoke damage in this room than in the living room/kitchen. The bathroom of this

apartment was located at the southwest corner of this apartment, and it appeared to have less smoke damage than the living room/kitchen area.

During a search of the residence, in the kitchen, Detective Klabunde recovered a red gasoline can from the floor near the living room, as well a red fire extinguisher, and a fire extinguisher cabinet hammer used to access the fire extinguisher. In the living room, Detective Klabunde recovered a bloody blanket, a fire extinguisher pin, a gas can nozzle and the key fob for a Toyota. Lastly in the bathroom, Detective recovered **an unfired 9mm GFL cartridge**. Lastly, parked in the parking lot, Detective Klabunde located the victim's red Toyota Camry 4 door, WI plate #ARZ-2792.

Complaint is further based upon the statement of City of Milwaukee Police Detective Amy Stolowski, who is trained and experienced in the area of fire investigations. Detective Stolowski determined that the fire origin was light weight combustibles on the floor of the living room and the cause of the fire was arson.

### Autopsy

Complaint is further based upon the statement of Dr. Wieslawa Tlomak, the Chief Medical Examiner of Milwaukee County who is duly licensed practice medicine in the State of Wisconsin, and is trained and experienced in the field of forensic pathology. Dr. Tlomak performed an autopsy on the victim, Cashay Henderson and determined that she had suffered two gunshot wounds. The first bullet entered the left scalp and exited the right scalp, traveling left to right, back to front and upward. The second bullet entered on the left cheek and exited at the left neck, traveling left to right, front to back and upward. Dr. Tlomak further observed several thermal injuries consisting of both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> degree burns of the face, neck, abdomen and back. Dr. Tlomak determined that the cause of death was multiple gunshot wounds and the manner of death was homicide.

### Statements of Witnesses GV and TG

Complaint is further based upon the statement of TG, who states that she lives in an apartment on the same floor as the victim. TG stated that victim lives alone, but sometimes she sees men coming and going from the victim's apartment. TG also noted that the victim drives a red Toyota Camry which the victim normally parks in the back.

TG stated that she arrived home at approximately 10:30 and noticed that the victim's car was not parked in the parking lot. TG stated that her friend, GV, and stayed the night. TG stated that she went to bed around 1 am or 2 am and looked out the window and still did not see the victim's vehicle parked in the parking lot.

TG stated that she woke up around 7:30 a.m. and she smelled gas. TG stated that she asked GV to check the stove, but the stove was turned off. TG also stated that GV asked TG if TG heard a gunshot early in the morning, but TG stated she never heard a gunshot that morning.

TG stated that 8:00 or 8:30 a.m., the apartment appeared to get smoky or hazy and also smelled like burnt plastic. Around this time, TG stated that she looked out the apartment window and now saw the victim's car parked in the parking lot.

By around 9:00 a.m., TG noted that the smoke was worse and appeared to be coming through her air vent. She went to the victim's apartment, but nobody answered. TG went outside and saw smoke coming from the victim's vent. TG and GV then called 911.

Complaint is also based upon the statement of GV, who confirmed TG's statements regarding the smoke and calling 911. Additionally, GV stated that during the night, she was woken by a loud noise,

that she thought may been a gunshot. GV stated she was unsure if it was a dream. GV stated that she got out of bed, got a drink of water, and looked at her phone and saw that it was 5:33 a.m. GV stated that she went back to bed.

### **Video Camera Footage**

Based upon TG's statements regarding the victim's vehicle, Milwaukee Police attempted to see if the victim's vehicle was captured on any Milwaukee Police pole cameras that have may have captured the vehicle prior to the victim arriving home. Affiant is aware that a pole camera located at Teutonia and Villard, at 3:44 a.m., captured the victim's vehicle heading northbound on Teutonia and then turning to head eastbound on Villard. Affiant notes that this is consistent with victim's vehicle heading home to her apartment building.

Affiant also notes that review of the pole camera footage appears to show at least two different people in the vehicle. One person is in the driver's seat. It also appears that the a second person is in the front passenger seat. It also appears that this front passenger is wearing a long sleeve shirt that appears to have light colored sleeves and a dark colored front chest area.

Milwaukee police also obtained security video from residences and businesses in the area of the victim's apartment building. Affiant knows that the video recovered 5277 N. 29<sup>th</sup> Street captured the rear parking lot area of that building. This is the apartment building immediately to the south of the victim's apartment building. Video from this 5277 N. 29<sup>th</sup> Street at 8:45 a.m. captured a suspect on camera walking south across the rear parking lot of 5277 S. 29th St, which is the victim's apartment building. The supect then continues behind the garage of 5266 N. Teutonia Ave. The garage is accessed by 29th St. there are footprints that go in this direction and then appear to go to west toward Teutonia along the north side of 5262 N. Teutonia Ave. Pole camera captures the suspect walking out of this driveway and crossing Teutonia to the west side of the street. He then is captured by the pole camera continuing south to Villard past the CVS, (3030 W Villard) then west on Villard on the northern sidewalk for a short time until crossing toward the McDonald's lot. (5191 N Teutonia Av) Pole camera and McDonalds cameras capture him walking through the McDonalds lot, back toward Teutonia and then going south on the western sidewalk of Teutonia. The suspect then goes out of view after that footage.

From all of this security camera footage, the suspect appears to be wearing a Black Vest with a hood, over a gray sweatshirt (consistent with a light sleeves and a dark front chest area), light colored sweat pants with a dark colored strip from the waist to the knee on both legs and possibly wearing "Hey Dude" brand shoes.

### **Processing the Victim's Vehicle**

As security video appeared to show that the suspect had been in the passenger seat of the victim's vehicle, Milwaukee Police Forensic Investigator Bryan Miller processed the victim's vehicle, as well as several items inside the vehicle. In particular, Investigator Miller processed a container of Lysol wipes that was recovered from the front passenger floorboard of the vehicle. A latent print was recovered from this container and Milwaukee Police Department Latent Print Examiner Benjamin Hurley later determined that the latent print was the left ring finger of the above mentioned Defendant, Cordell Howze.

### **Statement of PS**

Complaint is further based upon the statement of PS, an adult citizen witness, who has known the above Defendant for two years and identified him from a photograph. PS stated that on Saturday, February 25, 2023, the Defendant asked PS to drive him from Neenah to Milwaukee. PS indicated that he did and that the Defendant was wearing light colored cargo pants, as well as dark jacket with grey

sleeves. Affiant knows that this is consistent with the clothing worn by the suspect in the security video described above. PS drove the Defendant to Milwaukee, dropped him off, and then went back home alone.

PS indicated that on Monday night, February 27<sup>th</sup>, the Defendant showed up at PS's residence in Neenah without calling first. PS indicated that the Defendant was waiting outside when PS's wife arrived home and that the Defendant had a firearm with a green laser beam, which he pointed at her head.

PS stated that he got home and the Defendant was in his living room armed with a black Sig 9mm PT20 handgun with a green laser beam and an extended magazine. PS stated that he took the firearm and took it apart.

PS stated that the Defendant was acting strange and had a blank stare on his face. PS stated that the Defendant then showed him a video on the Defendant's phone which depicted what appeared to be a dead African American female with apparent blood on the female's head, as well as on the floor and pillows. In the video, the Defendant appears to be walking around an apartment building and in the video, PS could see a yellow house across the street through the window. Additionally, PS saw an aquarium that contained a **snake**. From this description, it is apparent that the video the Defendant showed PS is off the victim's dead body, as the yellow house across the street and the snake are consistent with the victim's apartment.

PS stated that the Defendant then stated "I caught a body of a disgusting ass tran." Affiant knows that the term "caught a body" means, in this context, that the Defendant is admitting that he killed a transgendered person. The Defendant also stated that he put his phone in airplane mode so that the police could not track it. The Defendant also mentioned that he wanted to kill several other people.

When the Defendant reacquired the gun and starting pointing it at people, PS told the Defendant that he had to leave.

#### **Statement of LL**

Complaint is further based upon the statement of LL, who stated that she talked to the Defendant, whom she identified from a photo, after he showed up at her residence in Neenah. LL stated that the Defendant was making paranoid statements and that he told LL that he had "popped" a "transvestite" in Milwaukee. LL also described the Defendant as having a firearm with a green laser sight.

#### **Statement of Defendant's Mother**

Complaint is further based upon the statement of the Defendant's mother, RH, who stated that the Defendant arrived at her house after being driven there by a friend from Neenah. That evening, RH saw the Defendant dancing to rap music with a firearm. RH stated that the firearm had a laser beam on it. RH stated that she went to bed, but she did overhear the Defendant on a phone call and heard the Defendant state, "I love you, I will be right out."

RH stated that the next morning, Sunday, the Defendant was not there, but came home later that night. RH described the Defendant as wearing light pants, as well as dark vest over a lighter sweatshirt, again consistent with the description of the suspect's clothing in the video. RH stated that the Defendant appeared agitated and handed her a Gucci purse. RH later turned this purse over to police who were able to show it to the victim's friends who identified it as the victim's purse.

RH stated that the Defendant also gave her a Rolex watch, which she also turned over to police. Police were able to identify this as the victim's purse, again through the victim's friends who were able to find a photo of that watch on the victim's Facebook page and shows those to police.

Complaint is further based upon the statement of Detective Shaun Lesniewski, who was able to determine through interviews with the Defendant's family that the Defendant had also spent some time at the Defendant's grandmother's house. Detective Lesniewski went to the grandmother's house and was able to recover three letters all addressed to the victim, thus further consistent with the above evidence that the Defendant went to the victim's house, killed her, attempted to burn the house in an attempt to cover it up, and stole the victim's purse, watch, and mail.

### **Arrest of the Defendant**

Complainant knows that on February 28, 2023, City of Neenah Police Officer Joseph Benoit and other officers with the Neenah and Menasha Police Departments attempted to locate the above Defendant and arrest the Defendant in the City of Neenah. The Defendant was believed to be driving a 2019 White Chevrolet Trax, which fled as Officer attempted to arrest the Defendant. During the chase and before the Defendant was apprehended, the above Defendant threw several items into the snow which included a Black Sig Sauer P320 9mm Semi-automatic handgun (disassembled and matching the description of the firearm described by PS) with a green laser attachment, as well as three firearm magazines (one of which contained 8 GFL 9mm cartridges similar to the unfired cartridge found in the victim's bathroom). The Defendant was eventually taken into custody after his vehicle was disabled during the pursuit. Additionally, Complainant knows that clothing consistent with that described by witnesses and seen in the video was recovered during the Defendant's arrest.

### **Defendant's Prior Record**

Complaint is further based upon Wisconsin CCAP records which indicate that in Outagamie County Case 20 CF 857, the Defendant was convicted of the felony offense on August 30, 2021 of the felony offense of Battery/Threat to Judge, Prosecutor, or Law Enforcement Officer in violation of Wisconsin Statute Section 940.203(2) and that said conviction remains of record and unreversed as of the time of this offense.

The Defendant also has prior felony convictions in Milwaukee County case 09 CF 4392 for Armed Robbery, Milwaukee County case 14 CF 758 for Armed Robbery and Waukesha County case 14 CF 460 for Felony Theft. All three of these felony convictions remained of record and unreversed at the time of this offense.

\*\*\*\*End of Complaint\*\*\*\*

### **Electronic Filing Notice:**

This case was electronically filed with the Milwaukee County Clerk of Circuit Court office. The electronic filing system is designed to allow for fast, reliable exchange of documents in court cases. Parties who register as electronic parties can file, receive and view documents online through the court electronic filing website. A document filed electronically has the same legal effect as a document filed by traditional means. You may also register as an electronic party by following the instructions found at <http://efiling.wicourts.gov/> and may withdraw as an electronic party at any time. There is a \$ 20.00 fee to register as an electronic party. If you are not represented by an attorney and would like to register an electronic party, you will need to contact the Clerk of Circuit Court office at 414-278-4120.

Unless you register as an electronic party, you will be served with traditional paper documents by other parties and by the court. You must file and serve traditional paper documents.

Criminal Complaint prepared by Grant I. Huebner.  
ADA Assigned Email Address: grant.huebner@da.wi.gov

Subscribed and sworn to before me on 03/05/23

Electronically Signed By:

Grant I. Huebner

Assistant District Attorney

State Bar #: 1036890

Electronically Signed By:

Detective Michael Fedel

Complainant