

## Man pleads guilty to avert trial in murder of two children

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A Detroit **man** pleaded **guilty** today **to** two counts of second-degree murder in the execution-style killing of two boys in a drug robbery in February.

Deandre Witherspoon, 23, would have gone **to** trial Tuesday for first-degree murder in the slayings of Orlando Herron, 13, and Darren Johnson, 12, who were shot **to** death during a robbery of a drug house operated by their cousin on Mansfield Street. Two accomplices in the killings face mandatory life sentences without parole and three others have accepted plea bargains **to** escape similar punishment.

Witherspoon, whom Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Christine Kowal said helped set up the crime, will be sentenced Nov. 12. He will receive 20-40 years in the killings, 20-30 years for armed robbery, and must serve two years for the firearms charge before the other sentences kick in

The two boys were spending the weekend with their cousin Ronell Thompson, 23, when the group led by Sonya O'Neal, 38, and Robert Reed, 36, stormed into the house looking for drugs and money. O'Neal shot both boys while Reed shot Thompson several times. Thompson survived. Two weeks ago two juries found O'Neal and Reed **guilty** of multiple charges of murder, kidnapping and robbery. The pair will be sentenced **to** mandatory life in prison without parole on Wednesday.

"Those two boys would be in school today if it were not for Witherspoon and O'Neal," Kowal said. She said Witherspoon cased Thompson's house for the robbery.

Earlier Charles Moore, 39, pleaded **guilty to** second-degree murder other related charges and testified against O'Neal and Reed. He will be sentenced on Nov. 5 **to** a total of 22 **to** 30 years.

Torrisandois Lyons, 42, also pleaded **guilty to** multiple murder and other charges and will be sentenced **to** 27 **to** 50 years on Nov. 9. A fifth defendant, Terry Blakely, 52, pleaded **guilty to** armed robbery and unlawful imprisonment and will be sentenced Nov. 9 **to** 10-15 years on each charge.

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