

## **SHE HELPED, SHE HUMMED - SHE'S GUILTY OF MURDER - WOMAN CONVICTED IN STORE KILLINGS**

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In the end, video images of **Leslie Gordon** calmly ushering a man to his death and later humming as she passed his and others' bodies proved damning enough to condemn her.

Attorneys on both sides indicated the surveillance video from Neil's Party Store in Westland last Sept. 11 was the key piece of evidence in a jury's decision Friday to convict Gordon of murder and assault.

Gordon, 24, of Detroit is to be sentenced March 17. The murder charges carry mandatory terms of life in prison without parole.

It was companion Michael Schofield, not Gordon, who shot six people, killing four, during a botched robbery at the party store. Schofield took his own life an hour after the killings, leaving Gordon to face charges as his accomplice.

She may not have pulled the trigger, Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Christine Kowal said, but her aid made her just as complicit as Schofield in the massacre. "He couldn't have done this without her," she said.

After the verdict was read, relatives of the victims cried and clasped each other in relief. Nabil Atcho, the brother-in-law of victim Feras Yousif, approached Kowal to offer his family's lifelong loyalty and respect.

"Justice was served," Atcho, 42, of Sterling Heights told the Free Press. "I hope she goes away for a long time."

Defense attorney Marvin Barnett argued during the two-week trial in Detroit that Schofield threatened Gordon and forced her to join in his crimes. He also said Gordon has been haunted by the lives she saw destroyed.

But she appeared calm in the surveillance video played in court Feb. 3 to the sobs and gasps of victims' relatives. The tape showed her unlocking the door to welcome two customers into the store -- where Schofield would kill one and wound the other moments later -- and humming as she walked among the victims.

"Honestly, it appears as though she's going along with this," Barnett said Friday of the video's depiction of his client. "The problem was she was acting to convince this guy not to kill her, as these other people were."

Yousif, a 29-year-old store employee from Oak Park, pleaded for his life and told Schofield, in a last-ditch attempt at survival, "I love you." Schofield responded by shooting him in the head. Also killed that night were customers James Kuebler, 35, of Westland, Kenneth Littlefield, 63, of Canton and his nephew Keith Gaddis, 44, of Detroit.

Employee Conrad Hasper, 25, and customer Fuad Abuali, 29, were shot but survived. Hasper testified that he screamed, cried and prayed in the moments after the bullet passed through his face and briefly blackened his vision.

Gordon also testified, describing her fear of Schofield before, during and after the 3 1/2-minute rampage. Following the bloodshed -- and a failed attempt to open the cash register -- the two fled, and led police on a chase in Schofield's Corvette. When they were caught, Schofield put a gun to his head and fired.

The surveillance video and a transcript of its audio track were the only pieces of evidence the jurors requested Friday morning during deliberations. By 1:15 p.m., they were ready with their verdict: guilty of four counts of first-degree felony murder, three counts of first-degree premeditated murder, one count of second-degree murder, two counts of assault with intent to murder and two counts of assault with intent to rob while armed.

Barnett said Gordon is devastated and will likely appeal.

As Gordon buried her head in her hands in court Friday, Westland Police Sgt. David Heater watched her with a mixture of relief and compassion. He handled the case and was the first to interview Gordon after her arrest that night -- a night he now calls his own 9/11.

"There is no joy in this moment, no happiness in a guilty verdict," Heater said. "But it's the outcome that in my opinion was the proper one.

"I will never walk into a party store the same way again in my life."

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Caption: Photo

**Leslie Gordon** said she feared the gunman who was her companion.

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