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Cheers erupt after all charges against Highers brothers are dismissed

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Raymond and Thomas Highers wait with their attorney Valerie Newman at Frank Murphy Hall of Justice for Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Lawrence Talon to dismiss murder charges against them Thursday Sep. 26, 2013. / Mandi Wright/Detroit Free Press



By **Elisha Anderson**
Detroit Free Press Staff
Writer

People clapped, cars honked and shouts of “way overdue” could be heard when two brothers, flanked by media, walked out of the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice in Detroit this morning.

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Moments earlier, all charges against Thomas Highers, 48, and Raymond Highers, 47, who both spent 25 years in prison for murder, were dismissed by Wayne County Circuit Judge Lawrence Talon.

The brothers were arrested in 1987 for the murder of Robert Karey. They were released from prison last summer after new evidence surfaced in their case but faced a second trial.

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Raymond Highers stands on left as his brother Thomas Highers hugs attorney Gabi Silver at Frank Murphy Hall of Justice after Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Lawrence Talon dismissed murder charges against them Thursday Sep. 26, 2013. / Mandi Wright/Detroit Free Press

They hugged their attorneys and walked out of the courthouse, each holding the hand of their girlfriend.

“It is a tremendous relief,” Thomas Highers said.

“We have to move forward with life and that’s what we’re trying to do now,” Raymond Highers said. “In my eyes, it’s over. The truth spoke and that’s why we’re here.”

The men’s case was overturned when new witnesses came forward and identified the gunman who killed Karey as black. The Highers are white.

Prosecutors contend their evidence gives reason to believe the Highers were responsible for the crime but moved to dismiss the case this morning, saying they felt they were unable to proceed to trial after 26 years because some witnesses have died, others memories were affected, and some physical evidence and files associated with the case can’t be found.

“This is not a case where we are seeking dismissal because of anything that we did wrong,” said Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Michael Reynolds.

Valerie Newman represents the Highers and said the men did nothing wrong.

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“This should have happened years ago when we came forward with the new evidence,” she said.

Before the charges were dismissed, Talon said it has been a long journey for everyone involved in the case.

“No one is criticizing the role that any of these people had,” he said. “The prosecutor’s office represents the people of the state of Michigan, the attorneys for the defendants represent the defendants, and I know that they truly believe in their position.”

Talon said he respected all the parties in the case but said he found part of a statement made by Wayne County Prosecutor’s Kym Worthy “troublesome” where she said “sadly, in this case justice was not done.”

“Both sides had a full, fair, complete opportunity to litigate the case,” Talon countered.

He dismissed the cases without prejudice, meaning that charges could be filed again in the future if new evidence arises.

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Family and friends of the men filled the courtroom today when the decision came down. They were instructed not to celebrate in the court as the hearing got under way.

"I'm elated," said Janet Hirth, the men's aunt. "It's just the best day in 26 years. It's long-awaited. We've always believed in their innocence since day one"

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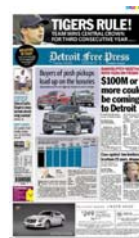


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