

## Judge: Confederate statue no reason to move murder trial



by KSLA Staff | February 6, 2017 at 5:47 PM CST - Updated July 5 at 6:30 PM

BENTON, LA (KSLA) - A Confederate monument stands outside the Bossier Parish Courthouse.

A man accused of killing 2 young women on Mother's Day 2014 says that's reason enough to have his trial moved elsewhere.

Today, a judge disagreed.

Brandan Butler, now 28, is set to go to trial in May on two counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of 26-year-old Karyl Cox and 24-year-old Jacqueline Beadle. The women were found shot to death inside their Bragg St. home on May 11, 2014. Butler reportedly went to their memorial service before skipping town. He was later captured in Bogalusa, La.



Mother's Day murder suspect Brandon Butler wanted his trial moved to another location because of this Confederate monument outside the Bossier Parish Courthouse in Benton. (Source: Nick Lawton/KSLA News 12)



Brandon Butler, 28 (Source: Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office)

Prosecutors have said they will seek the death penalty.

Butler's attorney, Kathryn Sheely of the Baton Rouge Capital Conflict Office, filed the "Motion for change of venue to a site that does not boast a state-sponsored confederate monument" in January, claiming,

"All potential jurors entering the front steps of this Bossier Courthouse walk between the courthouse and the pictured monument as they approach from the parking lot, even before they pass the American flag at the front entrance."

As part of the motion, Butler asked that the monument to be covered during the trial if the change of venue was not granted and that the jury not be brought within sight of the covered monument or allowed to use the front of the courthouse during breaks.

"Everybody walks in front of this monument before you go in to the courthouse and silence to what that monument represents consent. We don't consent to it or what it has come to stand for," Sheely told KSLA after Wednesday morning's hearing.

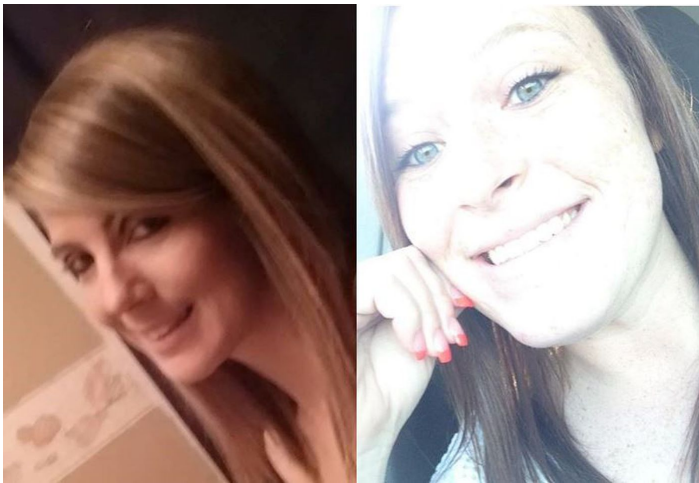
The District Attorney's office filed a reply to the motion, pointing out that a change of venue can only be granted when the state or the defendant proves that a fair and impartial trial is not

possible because of public opinion or pre-trial publicity. Prosecutors also noted that any concerns about prejudice could be addressed during jury selection and that Butler had failed to prove any actual prejudice caused by the existence of the status.

At a hearing Wednesday morning, Judge Mike Nerren agreed with the prosecution and denied the motion, saying that there was no evidence that the monument would have a discriminatory

effect on the jury pool.

"It was placed there in the 70s and there's been no showing that it had any discriminatory impact," said Judge Nerren. "These people exist everywhere. I'd like to think they comprise a very small minority. I don't know if they have any influence on this jury pool. You don't know where they're coming from."



Jacqueline Beadle, 24, and Karyl Ann Cox, 26 (Source: Family photos)

"The monument is on state grounds. It's in front of this courthouse. It was moved in front of the courthouse in the 1970s. That has to mean something and, to me, that means that anyone who allows this monument to be in front of the court approves of what that stands for," countered Sheely.

Nerren also denied a motion filed by Butler's attorneys to suppress evidence, including all of his statements made to police, even though he claims those statements did not contain a confession or provide evidence as to his guilt.

Among other things, Butler's motion claimed the statements were hearsay, irrelevant and



26-year-old Karyl Cox and 24-year-old Jacqueline Beadle were found shot to death inside their Bragg St. home in Bossier City on Mother's Day, May 11, 2014. (Source: KSLA News 12)

would be an attack on his character. The motion also argued that allowing the statements would infringe on his right not to testify on his own behalf because it would force his defense to rebut the veracity of the statements.

Prosecutors argued that Butler's statements didn't have to prove his guilt to be relevant at trial.

The DA's response to the motion to suppress lists 22 statements in particular made by Butler in 2 taped statements to investigators.

That list included Butler's initial reaction when he was told his fingerprints were found in blood at the crime scene, as well as what he said later to police about those fingerprints and his explanation for it.

It also included his statements about how he knew the victims, even referring to Karyl Cox as his "best friend" and that he borrowed her car visited her at her home frequently, including a few days before the murders.


According to prosecutors, Butler also admitted to police that he'd argued with Cox a few days before the murders and knew she kept a safe in the house.

Butler also made statements to police about his physical contact with Jacqueline Beadle, the clothes he was wearing at the time of the incident, the time he arrived, his transportation from the scene, and where he showered and cleaned up after. Prosecutors say Butler made false statements about other people he claimed were at the scene of the incident and argued that all of those statements, including his explanation for the false statement about who was there, are all relevant.

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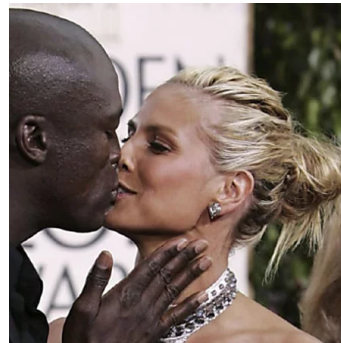


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