

WCCO-TV - Minnesota's Breaking News, Video, Weather, Traffic and Sports: Two Teens Charged In Uptown Murder Case

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Two Te

(WCCO) *Minneapolis* Two Minneapolis teens were charged with first-degree murder on Thursday in the shooting death of a college student in the Uptown entertainment district last month, prosecutors said.

Billy Ray Deshawn Johnson, 17, and Donte Lamar Jacobs, also 17, were charged in Hennepin County District Court with first-degree murder while committing an aggravated robbery in the shooting of Michael Zebuhr, 25.

Prosecutors alleged that Johnson was the shooter while Jacobs was charged as his companion who drove the car and participated in the robbery.

According to the criminal complaint, Zebuhr's mother, Susanne Strong, told police they were approached by two black males on March 18. Strong said one of the men demanded her purse and took it off her shoulder. She said the other man, who was the taller of the two, then shot her son in the head before fleeing.

One of the items in Strong's purse was a cell phone, which was later located in a garbage bag behind a Columbia Heights, Minn. residence. Police said a fingerprint on that phone matches Jacobs'.

A witness saw a white Ford Taurus pull into a parking lot near the scene of the shooting and said Jacobs was driving the car, prosecutors said. The witness saw two black males get out of the car, and reported hearing a gunshot a short time later. The witness then saw the same two black males running toward the car.

Investigators said a second witness reported being in the white Taurus on the night of the shooting, along with Johnson, Jacobs, a juvenile male and another individual. The witness also reported Johnson and Jacobs had planned to rob people that night.

After hearing a gunshot, the witness and the juvenile male got out of the car and ran from the area, police said. Jacobs and Johnson returned to the car, where Jacobs got in and drove off with another person. Johnson fled on foot, according to the criminal complaint.

A third witness, who left in the car with Jacobs, corroborated the second witness's statement, but reported seeing the robbery and saw Johnson shoot Zebuhr, prosecutors said.

However Johnson's sister, Paris Johnson said her brother couldn't have committed the crime.

She said, "We all feel my brother didn't do it. I know what and I know what he's capable of doing and what he's not capable of doing and this is not something my 17-year-old brother would do."

Hennepin County District Attorney Amy Klobuchar said in a news release that since the teens were charged with first-degree murder they were automatically certified to stand trial as adults.

"Jacobs took the purse off the mom's shoulder and nearly, very close in time, Johnson took the gun and shot," Klobuchar said.

She said Zebuhr's mother remembered it was the taller of the two men who shot the gun.

While Johnson was in custody, with bail set at \$2 million, police were still searching on Thursday for Jacobs. Jacobs was originally charged last week on a warrant that was sealed to protect the investigation, Klobuchar said.

Police are not issuing the suspects' photos, as their investigation is continuing.

Authorities have three other suspects in custody in relation to this case.

An 18-year-old woman was arrested Monday, along with Johnson. Family members say she Johnson's girlfriend.

Authorities say she is being held on unrelated misdemeanor charges. Charges were not filed against her in connection with the Uptown case as of Thursday.

Two adults, one male and one female, were taken into custody Tuesday after police located the car believed to have been used in the shooting.

The car had been set on fire in what police say was an attempt to destroy evidence.

Arson charges against those suspects are pending, authorities said.

Zebuhr was walking with his mother March 18 in the popular entertainment district when the pair was assaulted by two robbers. They did not resist, but Zebuhr was shot in the head.

Police said on Tuesday they believed five people were involved in the incident, including Johnson and Jacobs.

Zebuhr died two days after being shot. He was a doctoral candidate in bioengineering at Clemson and was in Minneapolis visiting his sister. The Buckhannon, W. Va., native graduated from Davis and Elkins College in Elkins, W. Va., in 2005.

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