

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

COUNTY OF OKTIBBEHA

AFFIDAVIT OF TINA COCKRELL

I, Tina Cockrell, having been duly sworn, depose and state as follows:

1. I am over the age of twenty-one and am competent to make the statements contained in this affidavit. All statements are within my personal knowledge.
2. My name is Tina Cockrell. I am from and still live in Starkville, Mississippi.
3. Jesse Oden, who sometimes went by “Bone,” was my father. My father served as an officer with the Oktibbeha County Sheriff’s Department for twenty-two years. My father worked as an officer under former Sheriff Dolph Bryan, and my father once successfully sued Sheriff Bryan in federal court for intentional race discrimination (My father and I are Black). My father passed away in 2013.
4. My father worked for the Oktibbeha County Sheriff’s Department when the two Mississippi State University students (Jon Steckler and Tiffany Miller) were murdered in Starkville. My father carried out his job duties as requested by Sheriff Bryan during the investigation into the student murders, and my father did not disclose details about the case to our family. But before my father passed away, he told me that he thought the person arrested for the murder, Willie Manning, was innocent. I did not and do not know Willie Manning.
5. In December 1992, I lived in the University Hills Mobile Home Park in Starkville, Mississippi. My trailer was very close to the trailer where Tiffany Miller stayed. Because I was older than many of the Mississippi State students, I did not know Tiffany well. We knew who each other was, and we would waive at each other in the mobile home park. I did not know Jon Steckler.
6. Sometime after midnight on December 11, 1992, I heard what sounded like a white male yelling. The noise was coming from the direction of Tiffany Miller’s trailer. I do not know the exact time. I was watching a rerun of the latest episode of “In the Heat of the Night.” At one point, I heard the male yell something like, “I can’t believe what you did.” I never heard a female say anything. When I heard the yelling, I wanted to walk outside, but I was scared. So, I just listened.
7. After I heard the male yelling, I heard what sounded like two gunshots. Given my father was in law enforcement, I know the sound of gunshots. While there were fireworks being shot earlier in the day, the fireworks had stopped many hours before this.

8. After I heard the male yelling and heard what I thought was gunshots, I heard a vehicle engine start up and then a vehicle speed off.
9. The morning of December 11, 1992, I told my father what I heard, and I provided a statement. My dad told me that Sheriff Bryan said that I "didn't know what I was talking about."
10. I was never approached in 1993 by attorneys for Willie Manning about what I heard, and I was not asked to testify at trial.
11. In late 2022 and again in 2023, I spoke with individuals who work for the Mississippi Office of Capital Post-Conviction Counsel, who told me they represent Willie Manning.

Further affiant sayeth not.

Tina Cockrell
Tina Cockrell

SWORN AND SUBSCRIBED before me, this the 16th day of February 2023.

Curlene Bell
Notary Public

My Commission Expires:

June 22, 2026

