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Hennepin County victim and witness advocate acquitted of bribery

Kesha Green, accused of selling witness information, was found guilty of a lesser count.

By DAVID CHANEN, Star Tribune

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As an advocate for witnesses and victims of Hennepin County's most violent crimes, Kesha Green was a familiar sight in the courtroom. But not like this.

Green was accused last June of selling confidential information about a key witness in a gang-related homicide for \$180. County Attorney Mike Freeman even testified against her at her trial last week.

But on Thursday, Green was acquitted of bribery and aiding an offender. She was found guilty of the lesser charge of misconduct of a public officer.

The verdict was "a vindication of our belief she violated the public's trust," said Deputy County Attorney Pat Diamond.

But Green, 34, maintained that she was entrapped

in a scenario she described as the "perfect storm."

Defense attorney Fred Goetz argued Green was pushed into wrongdoing, then ensnared by an aggressive undercover sheriff's deputy and a poorly orchestrated investigation. The case was launched on the word of a repeat felon and longtime snitch who was an acquaintance of Green's best friend.


The plot unfolds

Little did Green know the consequences of a chance meeting in May between Brian S. Williams and her best friend, Nichelle Shannon. According to court testimony, Williams had helped Shannon several years earlier when she was leaving her husband, and had given her advice on the stock market. When they happened to see each other at a stoplight in north Minneapolis, they exchanged telephone numbers.


When they met later Williams told Shannon he was now "deep into religion." He persuaded her to invest \$10,000 in a lighting company, a deal Shannon said still hasn't made her a penny.

A short time later, Williams told Shannon a phony story that she was part of a federal investigation into bad real estate purchases made under her name. He offered to help "clear her name" if she could persuade her friend Kesha Green to help him get witness information. He played on her strong religious beliefs and had her questioning




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Green's loyalty as a friend if she didn't agree. Green was reluctant, but eventually gave in.

Williams, working with the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, helped a detective set up an undercover meeting with Green. On June 7, she met him at the Macy's food court in downtown Minneapolis and turned over the information for \$180. The detective was posing as "Mike," a friend of Williams.

Murder and a minister's son

In court Williams testified the information was for the Rev. Jerry McAfee, a church founder and activist in north Minneapolis for two decades. He said McAfee planned to pass the information on to his son Julian, the main suspect in a homicide last year. Williams alleged McAfee's son wanted to intimidate the witness so she would not testify against him.

During the trial, Jerry McAfee denied he asked for the information. His son hasn't been charged in the homicide, but police said he remains a suspect.

To avoid a conflict of interest, Assistant Ramsey County Attorney Clayton Robinson prosecuted the case. In his closing argument, he questioned why Green wasn't forthcoming with police about the reasons she felt compelled to give up the confidential information.

Shannon and Green testified that Williams wasn't at Shannon's barbecue last May, but Robinson said Williams didn't have another logical way to know about the information Green wanted to sell. As far as Green's reluctance, Robinson reminded the jury that she laughed and flirted during telephone conversations with Williams.

In presenting his entrapment defense, Goetz said government agents used deception and coercion "to get a dedicated public servant to do something she wouldn't have done." The investigation showed Green hadn't given out confidential information in her five years as an advocate until Williams entered the picture, he said.

Two weeks before Williams contacted Green, Eden Prairie police had confronted him about three burglaries. After the barbecue, he told Eden Prairie police about Green selling information. He was never charged in the burglaries, Goetz said. Williams has been convicted of nine felonies and he has been a confidential informant for 20 years, he said.

The methods used in this case were deplorable, Goetz said. Law enforcement isn't in the business to manufacture crimes, he said.

"Kesha admits she made some wrong choices in this case," he said. "Was she predisposed to make those choices? No."

But Diamond called Green's conduct unforgivable.

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She was seen on video willingly accepting cash in exchange for information that came from the county attorney's office, he said. They will ask for the maximum sentence of one year in jail.

"Advocates work with victims and witnesses to help them find courage to speak in court," he said. "It's inconceivable somebody would violate that kind of trust."

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