

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Juries convict 2 defendants of drug crimes; 3 others plead guilty

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Drug Team convicted two defendants at trial during the week of January 11, 2016. Two additional defendants pled guilty after motions to suppress evidence were denied, and another defendant pled guilty before his case was called for trial. The proceedings were held in Mecklenburg County Superior Court before The Honorable Richard D. Boner, Superior Court Judge.

Abel Masingene, 21, was tried for 1) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, 2) possession of drug paraphernalia and 3) possession with the intent to sell or deliver cocaine. The jury found Masingene *guilty* of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, possession of drug paraphernalia and the lesser-included offense of possession of cocaine. Judge Boner sentenced Masingene to 12-24 months in prison. In July 2014, Charlotte-Mecklenburg police responded to a complaint about drug activity. After speaking with Masingene, officers located more than 2 grams of crack cocaine, a digital scale and a handgun.

Claudia Rodriguez, 21, was tried for 1) two counts of possession with the intent to sell or deliver heroin, 2) two counts of delivering heroin and 3) two counts of selling heroin. Before the trial began, Rodriguez filed a motion to prevent the State from presenting certain pieces of evidence at trial. After arguments from the defense and the Assistant District Attorney, Judge Boner ruled that one piece of evidence was inadmissible but allowed the remaining evidence to be presented at trial. Then, the case proceeded to trial. The jury found Rodriguez *guilty* as charged. Judge Boner sentenced Rodriguez to 10-21 months in prison. She was also sentenced to an additional 13-25 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending her successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation. In December 2014 and again in January 2015, Rodriguez sold heroin to an undercover police officer.

Christopher Baltimore, 26, filed a motion to suppress certain evidence seized or obtained by law enforcement, alleging violations of his legal rights. Judge Boner, who heard arguments from the defense and the Assistant District Attorney, denied the motion. Baltimore then pled guilty as charged to 1) possession with the intent to sell or deliver marijuana, 2) maintaining a place for keeping controlled substances and 3) possession of drug paraphernalia. Baltimore was sentenced to 6-17 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation.

Bentration Harris, 29, also filed a motion to suppress certain evidence seized or obtained by law enforcement, alleging violations of his legal rights. Following arguments from the defense and the Assistant District Attorney, Judge Boner denied the motion. Harris then pled guilty as charged to 1) possession with the intent to sell or deliver marijuana, 2) felony possession of

marijuana, 3) possession of methamphetamine, 4) felony possession of a schedule I controlled substance and 5) possession of drug paraphernalia. Harris was sentenced to 5-15 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation. As one of the conditions of his probation, Harris must serve 6 months on house arrest.

Travis Young, 31, pled guilty to 1) possession with the intent to sell or deliver cocaine and 2) possession of drug paraphernalia. Young was sentenced to 10-21 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 30 months of supervised probation. As conditions of his probation, Young must serve 30 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail and serve 6 months on house arrest.

*Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit [www.charmeckda.com](http://www.charmeckda.com). For updates and other information, "like" the DA's Office on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/charmeckda](http://www.facebook.com/charmeckda) and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA.*

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