

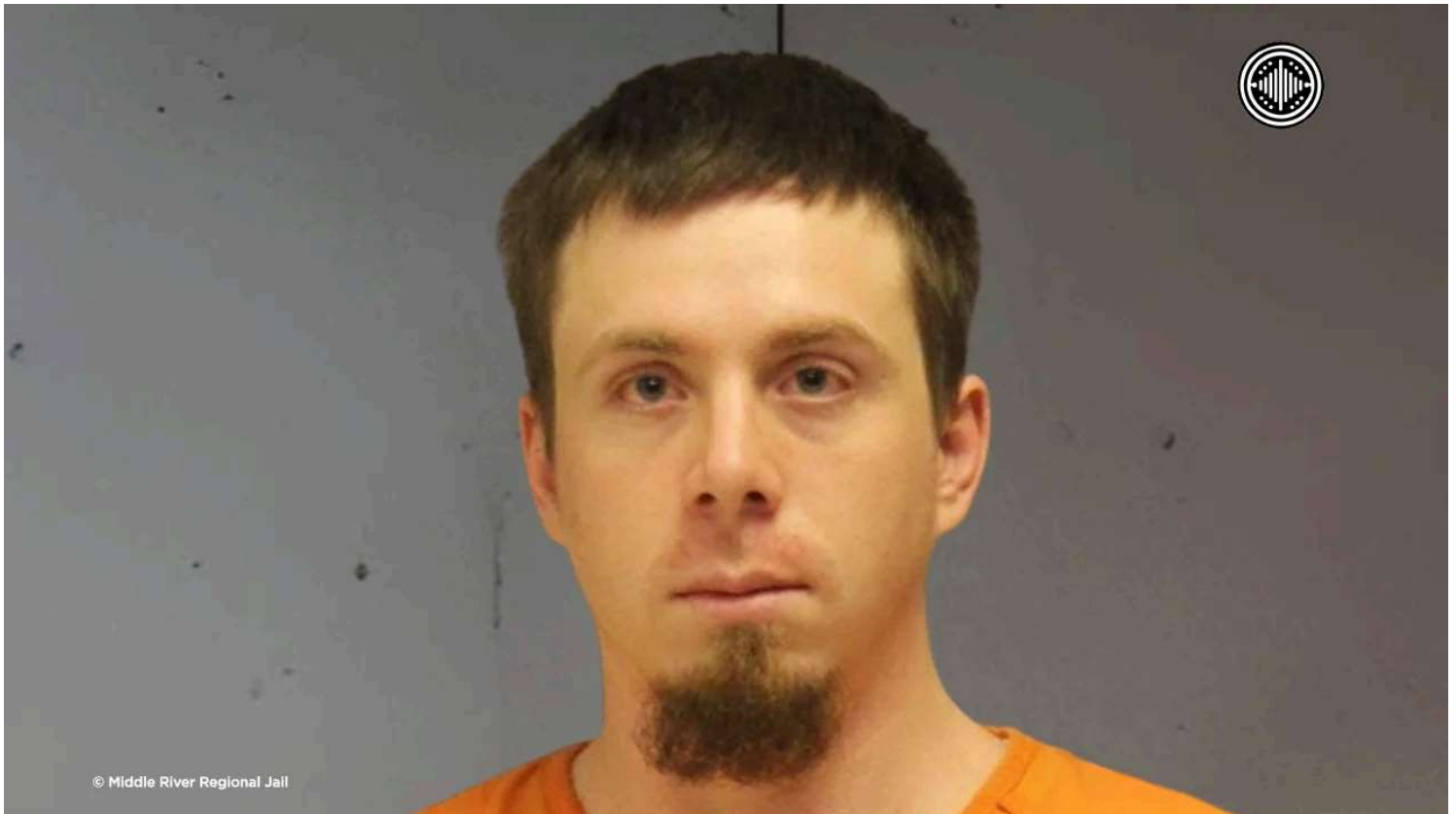
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Appeals Court Rejects Request to Overturn Conviction in Death of 3-Year-Old Khaleesi Cuthriell

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— Categories: *Crime*



A Virginia appeals court has upheld the aggravated murder conviction of Travis Brown, a man found guilty of killing 3-year-old Khaleesi Cuthriell while she was under his care. The decision, delivered Tuesday by a three-judge panel, brings an end to Brown's attempt to have his trial reheard.

During the trial, jurors viewed video footage showing Brown abusing the child, as well as heard from experts who described the physical and emotional trauma Khaleesi suffered before her death.

Brown, who is currently serving a life sentence, was convicted in February 2024 following emotional testimony and disturbing evidence presented in court. The child had been living with Brown and his partner, Candy Royer, at the time, after her biological mother, Amanda Arey, was taken into custody. Royer, who was also convicted, pleaded guilty in a separate case.

At the center of Brown's appeal was his claim that the trial court improperly allowed certain social media messages to be introduced as evidence. He argued that the content of those communications was "vague" and "cryptic" and should have been excluded as hearsay. However, Judges Doris Henderson Causey Malveaux, Vernida R. Chaney, and Lisa M. Lorish White disagreed, stating that the court had not committed any clear abuse of discretion in admitting the evidence.

According to the judges, messages that help provide context to a case are not considered hearsay under state law and can be used during a trial. The panel also stated plainly that it did not find any merit in Brown's argument that the trial court should have thrown out the charges due to lack of evidence.

"We disagree," the opinion read, in response to Brown's claim that the evidence for felony child abuse and aggravated murder was not enough to support his conviction.

The opinion further explained that both Brown and Royer were legally responsible for the child's welfare. The court highlighted the fact that Khaleesi's mother had named Royer as a caretaker before she was jailed and that Khaleesi lived in the home with both defendants. Brown also possessed a prepaid phone to facilitate contact between the child and her mother, though Royer later told Arey to direct all communication about Khaleesi to Brown.

The judges noted that Khaleesi had referred to Brown and Royer as "mommy and daddy," underscoring the level of responsibility they had assumed in her life.

One of the most damning elements of the trial came from expert witness Dr. Amy Foster, who testified that Khaleesi was "malnourished and gravely ill" while in Brown's custody.

Despite clear signs of her deteriorating condition, Brown never sought medical help. According to court records, Khaleesi could have survived if she had received timely care.

Brown himself admitted to the jury that he “handled it wrong” when Khaleesi became severely injured and began “gurgling blood from her mouth,” yet still failed to call for emergency assistance.

In their final ruling, the appellate court reaffirmed the jury’s findings and the trial court’s decisions, stating: “For the foregoing reasons, the trial court did not err in admitting four social media communications or in denying appellant’s motions to strike and to set aside verdicts of felony child abuse and aggravated murder. And so we affirm appellant’s convictions.”