

Jackson County prosecutors charge man serving murder sentence in separate killing

from 2004

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- A man already serving two decades for second degree murder now faces the same charge in a cold case where the victim's body parts were found in the Missouri River. Jackson County prosecutors are accusing Michael J. Gullett, 61, of killing Ryon McDonald in May of 2004 at a Kansas City riverfront camp.

According to a probable cause statement, Missouri Highway Patrol investigators say a human leg was found on May 29, 2004 at a Missouri River access in Callaway County. On May 30, two fisherman found a torso in the river in Moniteau County, and DNA tests confirmed the body parts were matches from the same victim. While the medical examiner in Boone County determined that traumatic injuries were the cause of death and that someone had cut up the body with an axe or hatchet, the victim wasn't identified.

There was a break in the case when McDonald's brother was searching for him in 2015 and spotted a profile on [MSHP's Missing Person's website](#) that showed tattoos unique to him. Further DNA tests revealed there was a high probability that it was Ryon McDonald when comparing the victim to his mother.

A witness told MSHP investigators that he heard Gullett and McDonald arguing one night at a homeless camp near Front Street and Kansas Avenue. The witness said that Gullett then hit McDonald in the head with a piece of wood. Another witness corroborated that account, adding that he heard Gullett talk about cutting McDonald up and throwing him in the river.

Gullett is currently behind bars at the Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron following a conviction in a murder from September of 2012. That victim was also [killed at a homeless camp along the Missouri River](#). Gullett is being held without bond related to the murder charge filed Monday.