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## **Witnesses recant statements in shooting of girl, 5, inside car**

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Associated Press

**PHILADELPHIA** - Prosecutors struggled yet again Tuesday to pursue violent-crime cases amid a pervasive code of silence, this time in the case of a 5-year-old fatally shot as she rode in a relative's car one Sunday morning.

At least four witnesses who initially named the gunman to police renounced key parts of their testimony during a preliminary hearing, including one whose videotaped police interview was played in court.

"I just went with what they wanted to hear," witness Ronald Newton said, trying to explain the contradiction between his videotaped account and his testimony on Tuesday. "I was nervous. So, I signed it (the statement) to get it over with."

Newton testified about 20 feet from the defendant, a hulking 24-year-old with a five-page rap sheet named Kevin Felder. Despite the wavering testimony from a parade of witnesses, a judge Tuesday held Felder in the Sept. 24 slaying of kindergartner Casha'e Rivers.

The next day, Newton told police that he had been in Felder's car when Felder fired a half-dozen shots at the white car.

The girl's mother, Alicia Corley, was circling the block at the request of a detailing shop where she was stopping. A worker had told her to use a different entrance.

But the four men in Felders' green car thought the car was following them, Newton said.

"It was behind us for a couple blocks. Kevin thought it belonged to guys from 34th Street," Newton said on the videotape, referring to a rival neighborhood group. "The driver of the car, Kevin, fired numerous shots out the window."

The car contained Corley, two female teenage relatives and her two children, Casha'e and a 1-year-old son.

Corley drove to a nearby firehouse after the shooting, but paramedics could not save the girl, who had been struck in the back. Another bullet was found in a laundry basket next to Casha'e, according to Tynah Green, 18, who was also in the back seat.

Another witness who equivocated Tuesday initially told police that Felder had fired at him from the green car about a half-hour earlier that day.

Richard Carpenter, 39, on Tuesday suggested that police improperly swayed him during a photo lineup.

"I really don't want to be here," Carpenter finally said. "I didn't want to jeopardize my family. I'm an innocent person. ... But there's a baby involved."

Defense lawyer Will Spade wrapped up his cross-examination by asking Carpenter if Felder was the man who had fired at him.

Carpenter squirmed and closed his eyes. "No," he finally said.

The case echoes that of another high-profile child slaying in Philadelphia, that of 10-year-old Faheem Thomas-Childs, who was killed in a shootout outside his school in February 2004.

"It unfortunately happens quite a bit," Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Selber said after Tuesday's hearing. "The jury can decide whether to accept the testimony on the day of trial, or to accept the statement that was given to detectives a day or two after the murder."

Felder's lawyer predicted that his client will be acquitted.

"I understand why the court had to hold Kevin over for trial, but I think there will be a different result when we go before a jury," Spade said Tuesday evening.

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