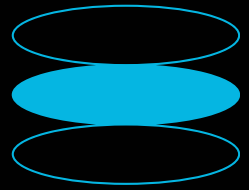


CASE BRIEF

Smith & Smith Law Offices



Case Background

Rover v Taylor (2021)

On January 28, 2006, a shooting in Philadelphia's Strawberry Mansion neighborhood paralyzed 6-year-old Jabar Wright. 18 year old Donte Rover was wrongly identified by LaRhonda Wright as the shooter. He was arrested later that night while walking home after shopping with friends at Gallery Mall and South Street, miles from the scene. Rover was tried, convicted, and sentenced to 62½ to 125 years in prison for attempted murder and related charges.

Demographics

- **Age:** 18
- **Gender:** Male
- **Ethnicity:** African American
- **Location:** North Philadelphia
- **Occupation:** Unknown
- **Education:** Unknown
- **Marital Status:** Single

Client Narrative

I was 18 years old on January 28, 2006. Just a regular day, trying to enjoy the weekend — hanging with friends, grabbing some food, and shopping in downtown Philly. I remember it clearly: I was at The Gallery Mall, then hit the Net store on South Street. I had receipts. There were cameras. I was nowhere near that shooting.

Then my life flipped.

That evening, gunshots rang out from a group of young men standing on a corner in the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood of North Philadelphia. One of the bullets fired from the group struck a passing car, hitting and paralyzing a 6-year-old boy. LaRhonda Wright, who was in the car, and the grandmother of the boy that was shot, claimed that I fired the shot that struck her grandson. She had known me for more than a decade at that point, and she knew I sometimes hung out in the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood. Mrs. Wright's husband, Benjamin, and I didn't get along because of some past drama that I had with his nephew. Therefore, her whole family thought I fired the shot that hit their grandson, intending to hit Benjamin.

Mrs. Wright told the police she thought I did it, and the police stopped me that same night, right outside my home. I had no clue what was going on. Next thing I knew, I was being charged with attempted murder, aggravated assault, attempted aggravated assault, conspiracy and carrying a firearm without a license. — accused of shooting a little boy I'd never even seen. My cousin and two other friends were charged as well. The news said he was paralyzed. It was horrible, but I didn't do it. I thought, "This is all a mistake — once they see the proof, I'll be cleared."

But that never happened.

At the trial, Mrs. Wright admitted that her statement to police made no mention of a gun. Benjamin also admitted at the trial, that during the shooting, LaRhonda said she didn't know who was shooting at the car.

My mom got on the stand and testified about security footage that she obtained from the two stores I was in that night. Several people identified me in both videos, and the time stamps proved that I was not in the area where the shooting took place. The prosecution argued that the video evidence was inconclusive.

My lawyer, Nino Taylor, barely talked to me. He didn't call my friends as witnesses — the people who were with me that night. He didn't use the surveillance footage that showed me in Center City, miles away from the scene. Worse, he didn't let the jury see it either.

I was convicted in 2007. 62½ to 125 years. Just like that — my life was stolen.

Previous Attorney Information

- Nino Taylor
- Retained (hired) by Donte's mother
- He has represented entertainers, attorneys, physicians, judges, politicians, and NBA superstars.
- Earned his law degree from Villanova University School of Law, graduating in 1966
- He had been practicing for 41 years at the time of Donte's conviction
- Prior to Donte's case, Nino Taylor had been suspended twice, once in 1992 and again in 1994. He was also disbarred by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1995, but reinstated at a later date. There are no publicly available records detailing the cause of the suspensions or disbarment. There is no record of disciplinary action since 1995.
- He currently maintains an active license in Pennsylvania

Summary

My attorney failed me in so many ways. Not just because I was found guilty, but because he failed to admit evidence that would have proven me innocent beyond a doubt.

Evidence Supporting Appeal

My attorney failed to present evidence that could have shown that my timeline of events was indeed the truth, and that I could not have committed the crime.

- Taylor failed to present the video from The Net store, proving that I was nowhere near the scene of the crime. See the attached affidavit from the store owner, Mr. Watson
- Taylor failed to call alibi witnesses to the stand, including a friend who could have testified he was in The Net video with me, and another friend who was with me throughout that evening and who had a receipt from The Net timestamped 8:09 p.m.. See the attached email to Mr. Taylor
- Taylor failed to present my receipt from the Gallery Mall timestamped 6:18 p.m.. See the attached receipt.

Questions to Consider

What specific actions or inactions by attorney Taylor are being cited as deficient?

Did Taylor's performance weaken Rovers case to the point of undermining confidence in the verdict?

Would the testimony or evidence that Taylor failed to present have cast doubt on the prosecution's case?

Did Taylor's actions (or inaction) deprive the jury of the chance to fully hear Rovers side of the story?

Could any of Taylor's choices be explained by tactical strategy, or do they reflect a lack of preparation?

Based on your analysis, do you believe Taylor's representation met the constitutional standard for effective assistance of counsel under Strickland? Why or why not?

How could a reasonably competent attorney have acted differently in this case?

THE NET STORE

123 MAIN STREET

SPRINGFIELD

TEL: (555) 123-4567

WWW.THENETSTORE.COM

DANTE ROVER

TRANSACTION ID: #NST885921

DATE: 2025-07-17 8:09 PM

CASHIER: LINDA M.

ETHERNET CABLE (10FT) \$14.99

USB WI-FI ADAPTER \$24.95

SURGE PROTECTOR \$19.50

SUBTOTAL 59.44

TAX (6%): 3.57

TOTAL 63.01

VISA **** 8291

APPROVED

THANK YOU FOR SHOPPING WITH US!

IN THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPEAL OF:

Rover v Taylor

)

)

)

)

Case No. 789006

File Under Seal

Affidavit in Support of
Rovers Whereabouts

I, Duane Watson, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

I am the owner of The Net Store, located at 123 Main Street, Springfield. On January 14th, 2016, during the evening hours, a shooting was reported to have occurred near the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood. Following the incident, I was approached by the mother of Donte Rover, who was concerned about his whereabouts at the time of the shooting.

Upon reviewing my store's surveillance footage from that evening, I confirmed that Donte Rover was indeed inside The Net Store at 8:09 PM, the approximate time the shooting took place. The security video clearly shows Donte at the front counter making a purchase and speaking with my staff. The footage includes a timestamp and unbroken visual continuity confirming his presence inside the store during the relevant timeframe.

I personally showed this video to Donte's mother, and she confirmed it was him in the footage. Based on the video evidence from my store's security system, I can verify that Donte Rover was inside The Net Store and not involved in or present at the location of the shooting when it occurred.

I affirm under penalty of perjury that the information provided above is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Client Note:

This affidavit was collected during the appeals process.

From: Donte.rover@email.com

To: Please – These Witnesses Can Prove My Innocence

Dear Mr. Tinari,

I'm reaching out with urgency and from the heart. I need your help now more than ever.

There are two people who can speak directly to my innocence, and I'm asking you to call them to the stand.

Jamal Hammet can testify that I'm clearly visible in the surveillance footage from The Net that night. He knows me well, and he's confident it's me on that tape. That alone could prove I wasn't anywhere near where the shooting happened.

Even more important, **Alton Paul** was with me the entire night. He can walk the court through every moment — where we were, what we did. He was there. His testimony can show that I didn't, and couldn't, do what I'm being accused of.

This case has turned my life upside down, and I'm doing everything I can to hold onto hope. These two men can help tell the truth — a truth that proves I'm not guilty. Please, let's make sure their voices are heard.

Sincerely,