

# One Arrest in Killing of FAMU Student

Contributed by Ryan Demetrius -- Black College Wire  
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18-year-old charged in Michelle Coleman's death; others still at large

One arrest has been made in the Overtown shooting that killed Florida A&M University student Michelle Coleman this summer.

At a news conference on August 19, Miami Police Chief John Timoney said that 18-year-old Rodney Miller was one of the suspects in the shooting spree. On July 6, Coleman attended a birthday party in Overtown, Miami where three gunmen dressed in black fired a rage of bullets in a crowd killing two people and injuring 10 people. Coleman's family is still mourning her death and is hoping police will find the other suspects that were involved. Coleman was living with her Aunt Sonja Wiley. Wiley was in shock when she found out her niece was a victim in the gunfire.

"I was devastated and traumatized when I first heard that Michelle was shot at the party," said Wiley. "Words could not even explain the pain I was feeling."

According to Wiley, Lawrence Smith invited Michelle and others to his birthday party and the guests were not aware that Smith shot at a group of Liberty City drug dealers the night before. Miller was one of the drug dealers who came back for retaliation and fired gunshots at Smith's party injuring 10 people. Even though police arrested Miller and charged him with two counts of second-degree murder, Wiley was still not pleased.

"Miller's arrest brings some closure to our family," Wiley said. "But I am still not relieved because it doesn't bring Michelle back."

The last thing Wiley said she remembers telling her niece prior to the incident was "I love you." The family is still in disbelief that Coleman is gone and said they have still not recuperated since the incident.

"There are tears absolutely everyday within our family," said Wiley. "Michelle was gone too soon and I will never be able to accept it."

Larry Coleman, Michelle's uncle, rushed to Jackson Memorial Hospital when he found out that his niece was taken away in critical condition. Larry said he was praying all the way to the hospital but felt it would not have a happy outcome when he found out her condition.

"When I arrived and the family told me the bullet hit her kidney, liver, and heart, I knew it would take almost a miracle to fully recover," Larry Coleman said. He said when he was sitting at that hospital knowing Michelle was in a room fighting to survive was one of the hardest moments of his life. "Picturing my sweet young niece struggling to live took a whole lot from me that day. The hardest part was that I knew Michelle was an innocent victim in the shooting who did not deserve any of this."

After the police had announced Rodney Miller was arrested for Coleman's death, one family member said the timing of events was ironic. "I was writing a song about how one day they would find my cousin's killer," said Rodney Thompson. "That same morning my mother told me they found a suspect and coincidentally, we shared the same first name."

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Ryan Demetrius writes for The Famuan, the Florida A&M University student newspaper, which originally published this article.