

State of South Carolina



Charleston County
101 Meeting Street, Suite 400
Charleston, SC 29401
Phone (843) 958-1900
Fax (843) 958-1905

Berkeley County
300-B California Avenue
Moncks Corner, SC 29461
Phone (843) 723-3800 ext. 4529
Fax (843) 719-4588

SCARLETT A. WILSON

Solicitor, Ninth Judicial Circuit

News Release

Contact: Julian F. Malasi
(843) 958-1939
malasij@scsolicitor9.org

For Immediate Release
June 24, 2008

After a thorough investigation, Solicitor's Office dismisses Murder charges against Stephanie Morosi.

Charleston, S.C. – Ninth Judicial Circuit Solicitor Scarlett A. Wilson announced today that after reviewing relevant case law and self-defense statutes, along with the undisputed evidence observed and collected by the Berkeley County Sheriff's Office ("BCSO"), the charges against Stephanie Morosi have been dismissed without prejudice.

The pertinent facts in Morosi's case as revealed by law enforcement's investigation are as follows: Stephanie Morosi and Jason Maxwell Truitt knew each other for approximately five years and lived together in Morosi's Ladson home for several months until September 11, 2006. At the time of Truitt's death, Morosi had begun eviction proceedings against Truitt. As a result, Truitt moved from Morosi's home several days before the shooting. According to Morosi and friends of Truitt's, Truitt had been extremely depressed. Morosi claims that Truitt had conversations about killing himself and others and that on at least one occasion, Truitt had been physically violent with her.

Morosi researched ways to get help in her violent relationship. A subsequent investigation by the Berkeley County Sheriff's Office confirmed that Morosi attended criminal domestic violence workshops at My Sister's House. In July 2006, Morosi bought the gun eventually used to kill Truitt.

In an interview with police immediately after the shooting, Morosi claimed that Jason Maxwell Truitt came after her during an argument in her home. She ran to her bedroom and tried to close the door but he forced it open. Truitt came after her yelling and screaming, so Morosi grabbed her gun, which was hidden in a bed pillow. She believed that he was going to kill her, and in response, she shot Truitt three times while the gun was still wrapped in the pillow. This was later confirmed by BCSO crime scene investigators. Truitt was armed with a hunting knife on his belt and a steak knife was on the floor beside his body. All of the case evidence points to Morosi protecting herself. She was 5 feet, 3 inches tall and weighed 108 pounds when she was arrested, while Truitt was 6'0" tall and 270 pounds.

Ninth Judicial Circuit Solicitor Scarlett A. Wilson explained, that in the State of South Carolina, "self-defense" is not an "affirmative defense" required to be proven by the defendant. Rather, it is the burden of the State to *disprove* "self-defense" beyond a reasonable doubt. The South Carolina General Assembly has codified what is commonly known as the "Castle Doctrine," which outlines several principles that protect citizens of this community. First, we all have a right to expect to remain safe within our homes, business and vehicles. Second, no person or crime victim should be required to surrender his personal safety to a criminal, nor should a person or victim be required to retreat in the face of an intrusion or attack. Third, a person who is attacked in their residence has

no duty to retreat and has the right to stand his ground and meet force with force. A person can use deadly force, if they reasonably believe it is necessary to prevent death or great bodily injury to him or to prevent the commission of a violent crime. Finally, South Carolina common law has made it clear that a person is not required to wait until her assailant “gets the drop on her.” In fact, she has the right to act in self-preservation and stop a would-be assailant from striking the first blow. State v. Starnes, 340 S.C. 312 (2000). Moreover, “when a person is justified in firing the first shot, she is justified in continuing to shoot until it is apparent that the danger to her life and body has ceased.” State v. Hendrix, 270 S.C. 653 (1978).

There is no evidence to disprove Morosi’s account of the shooting. As a result, the case will not be prosecuted by the Ninth Judicial Circuit Solicitor’s Office.

###