

SIXTH DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL OF FLORIDA

Jameslee Senatus v. State of Florida

No. 6D2025-0186, Sixth District Court of Appeal of Florida (June 19, 2026)

SUMMARY

The Sixth District Court of Appeal of Florida affirmed Jameslee Senatus's second-degree murder judgment and sentence. The court held that evidence including the close-range shooting, failure to render aid, post-shooting statements, and suspicious conduct was sufficient for a jury to find the requisite ill will, hatred, spite, or evil intent.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Sixth District Court of Appeal of Florida
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Mize, J.; Stargel, J.; Nardella, J.
JURISDICTION	Sixth District Court of Appeal of Florida
DECIDED	June 19, 2026
DOCKET	6D2025-0186
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appellant appealed the circuit court's denial of his motion for judgment of acquittal following his conviction for second-degree murder.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court viewed the evidence in the light most favorable to the State and asked whether a rational trier of fact could find the existence of the elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion
PARTIES	Jameslee Senatus v. State of Florida

TOPICS

- criminal procedure
- burden of proof
- appellate procedure
- standard of review
- evidence

PRACTICE AREAS

- criminal law
- criminal procedure
- appellate practice

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the evidence was legally sufficient to support a finding that Appellant acted with ill will, hatred, spite, or evil intent, as required for second-degree murder.
2. Whether the circuit court erred in denying Appellant's motion for judgment of acquittal.

HOLDINGS

1. The evidence was sufficient for a rational jury to find beyond a reasonable doubt that Appellant acted with ill will, hatred, spite, or evil intent toward the victim.
2. A conviction is supported by sufficient evidence when, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the State, a rational trier of fact could find the crime's elements beyond a reasonable doubt.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“There is sufficient evidence to sustain a conviction if, after viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the State, a rational trier of fact could find the existence of the elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.” (1)

“Even without any express testimony about a defendant’s malice or state of mind, ‘the circumstances surrounding the fatal act can prove ill will, spite, hatred or evil intent.’” (1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The State presented evidence that Appellant shot the victim in the chest at close range and did not render aid or seek help while the victim was still alive. Appellant later told a witness that he "popped" the victim because the victim had "started acting funny." The State also presented evidence of Appellant's suspicious conduct at and around the crime scene in the days after the shooting.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

After a jury trial in the Circuit Court for Lee County, Appellant was convicted of second-degree murder. The circuit court denied his motion for judgment of acquittal, and Appellant appealed, arguing that the State failed to prove the required ill-will, hatred, spite, or evil-intent element. The Sixth District Court of Appeal affirmed the judgment and sentence.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Perez v. State, 187 So. 3d 1279 (Fla. 1st DCA 2016)
- Poole v. State, 30 So. 3d 696 (Fla. 2d DCA 2010)
- Dubois v. State, 363 So. 3d 246 (Fla. 6th DCA 2023)
- Mackey v. State, 277 So. 3d 762 (Fla. 1st DCA 2019)
- Peoples v. State, 251 So. 3d 291 (Fla. 1st DCA 2018)

- Holmes v. State, 278 So. 3d 301 (Fla. 1st DCA 2019)
- Mooney v. State, 403 So. 3d 407 (Fla. 1st DCA 2025)

OPINION

Jameslee Senatus v. State of Florida

PER CURIAM.

SIXTH DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL

STATE OF FLORIDA

_____ Case No. 6D2025-0186 Lower Tribunal No. 2020-CF-000545

JAMESLEE SENATUS,

Appellant, v.

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Appellee. _____ Appeal from the Circuit Court for Lee County.

Bruce Kyle, Judge. June 19, 2026 MIZE, J. Jameslee Senatus (“Appellant”) challenges the lower court’s denial of his motion for judgment of acquittal, arguing that the State failed to prove that Appellant acted with ill will, hatred, spite, or evil intent, as required for a second-degree murder conviction. See § 782.04(2), Fla. Stat. (2020); Perez v. State, 187 So. 3d 1279, 1282 (Fla. 1st DCA 2016) (“The depraved-mind element of second-degree murder requires ‘ill will, hatred, spite, or an evil intent.’” (quoting Poole v. State, 30 So.3d 696, 698 (Fla. 2d DCA 2010))); Fla. Std. Jury Instr. (Crim) 7.4 (the State must demonstrate that the defendant engaged in an act or series of acts which was “done from ill will, hatred, spite, or an evil intent”). Because the evidence was sufficient for a jury to find that Appellant possessed ill will, hatred, spite, or evil intent toward the victim, we affirm. “There is sufficient evidence to sustain a conviction if, after viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the State, a rational trier of fact could find the existence of the elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.” Dubois v. State,

363 So. 3d 246, 247 (Fla. 6th DCA 2023) (internal quotations omitted). The State presented evidence at trial that Appellant shot the victim in the chest at close range and then failed to render aid or seek help for the victim while he was still alive. There was also evidence that Appellant later told one witness that he “popped” the victim because he “started acting funny.” Finally, there was evidence of Appellant’s suspicious behavior at and around the crime scene in the days following the shooting. The evidence of Appellant’s post-shooting conduct and statements was sufficient for the jury to find that Appellant possessed the requisite intent for second- degree murder. See Mackey v. State, 277 So. 3d 762, 768 (Fla. 1st DCA 2019) (“Even without any express testimony about a defendant’s malice or state of mind, ‘the circumstances surrounding the fatal act can prove ill will, spite, hatred or evil intent.’” (quoting Peoples v. State, 251 So. 3d 291, 303 (Fla. 1st DCA 2018))); see, e.g., Holmes v. State, 278 So. 3d 301, 305 (Fla. 1st DCA 2019) (holding that the 2 defendant’s failure to render aid or call for help after the victim was shot,

instead disposing of the gun and providing false reports, “support[ed] a finding that [the defendant] possessed ill will, hatred, spite, or evil intent towards the victim and that the shooting was no accident”); cf. *Perez*, 187 So. 3d at 1282-83 (defendant’s statement that he “should have killed” the victim right after shooting the victim “suggested malice” sufficient to sustain the second-degree murder conviction); *Mooney v. State*, 403 So. 3d 407, 411 (Fla. 1st DCA 2025) (evidence that the victim got “slick at the mouth” and “pissed [the defendant] off” was evidence from which a jury could find ill will, spite, hatred, or evil intent). Thus, we affirm Appellant’s judgment and sentence. AFFIRMED. STARGEL and NARDELLA, JJ., concur. Blair Allen, Public Defender, and Gary R. Gossett, Jr., Special Assistant Public Defender, Bartow, for Appellant. James Uthmeier, Attorney General, Tallahassee, and Allison C. Heim, Senior Assistant Attorney General, Tampa, for Appellee.

NOT FINAL UNTIL TIME EXPIRES TO FILE MOTION FOR REHEARING
AND DISPOSITION THEREOF IF TIMELY FILED