

SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA

Spann v. State

Spann · No. S26A0513 · Decided April 21, 2026

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Georgia affirmed Morris Charles Spann’s convictions for murder, aggravated assault, and firearm possession arising from the shooting death of his mother and the shooting of another person. The court held that the evidence was constitutionally sufficient, that the eyewitness and circumstantial evidence supported the convictions, and that the jury could reject Spann’s alternative hypotheses of innocence.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Georgia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Georgia
DECIDED	April 21, 2026
DOCKET	S26A0513
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Direct appeal from convictions for murder and related offenses following denial of a motion for new trial.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The evidence is viewed in the light most favorable to the prosecution, and the question is whether any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements of the crimes beyond a reasonable doubt. Conflicts in the evidence, witness credibility, and reasonable inferences are for the jury to resolve. A jury's rejection of an alternative hypothesis is not disturbed unless it is insupportable as a matter of law.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion; precedential value under Georgia law is not otherwise specified in the source.
PARTIES	Morris Charles Spann v. The State

TOPICS

- criminal procedure
- evidence
- due process
- reasonable doubt

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

appellate review

evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the trial evidence was constitutionally sufficient to support Spann's murder, aggravated-assault, and firearm-possession convictions.
2. Whether the evidence satisfied Georgia's circumstantial-evidence requirement by excluding every other reasonable hypothesis of innocence.
3. Whether the eyewitness identifications were sufficiently reliable despite poor visibility and Ricks's initial misidentification of his half-brother.

HOLDINGS

1. The evidence, viewed in the light most favorable to the prosecution, was sufficient for a rational jury to find Spann guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of the crimes of conviction.
2. OCGA § 24-14-6 did not apply to the aggravated-assault and associated firearm-possession convictions because direct eyewitness testimony established those offenses. Assuming the murder evidence was entirely circumstantial, the jury was authorized to reject Spann's alternative hypotheses as unreasonable.
3. The jury was authorized to credit Ricks's and his wife's identifications of Spann and to conclude that Ricks's initial identification of Bernard Spann was an error.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“When we evaluate a due process challenge to the sufficiency of the evidence, we view the evidence at trial “in the light most favorable to the prosecution” and ask whether “any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.”” (4)

“As an initial matter, that statute does not apply to Spann’s convictions for the aggravated assault of Ricks and the associated gun-possession charge, because the evidence that Spann committed those crimes was not entirely circumstantial: Ricks saw Spann shoot him.” (6)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In the early morning of July 30, 2011, Willie James Ricks saw Annie Bell Spann enter her home, heard gunshots, and then saw Morris Charles Spann leave the home holding a gun and shoot Ricks in the leg. Annie was found dead inside the home, which showed no forced entry and had another door locked from the inside. Police found .380-caliber casings associated with a handgun belonging to Spann's father, gunshot primer residue on Spann's clothing, and Spann nearby shortly after the shooting. Spann gave inconsistent accounts of his whereabouts and denied shooting anyone before being told that anyone had been shot.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A Clay County jury convicted Spann in 2013 of malice murder, felony murder, two aggravated assaults, and two firearm-possession offenses. The trial court later vacated Spann's life-without-parole sentence and resentenced

him to life with the possibility of parole for malice murder, while leaving the other sentences unaffected. After the trial court denied Spann's amended motion for new trial on September 24, 2025, Spann filed a timely notice of appeal. The Supreme Court of Georgia affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Veal v. State, 298 Ga. 691, 703 (2016)
- Montgomery v. Louisiana, 577 U.S. 190, 209-11 (2016)
- Holmes v. State, 311 Ga. 698, 704-05 (2021)
- Owens v. State, 303 Ga. 254, 258-59 (2018)
- Sturkey v. State, 319 Ga. 156, 164-65 (2024)
- Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307, 319 (1979)
- Foster v. State, 322 Ga. 425, 429-30 (2025)
- Perkins v. State, 313 Ga. 885, 891 (2022)
- Moore v. State, 314 Ga. 351, 354 (2022)
- Graves v. State, 306 Ga. 485, 487 (2019)
- Fouts v. State, 322 Ga. 116, 120 (2025)
- McGarity v. State, 311 Ga. 158, 161 (2021)
- Robinson v. State, 323 Ga. 7, 11-12 (2025)
- Hinton v. State, 312 Ga. 258, 261 (2021)
- Bradley v. State, 318 Ga. 142, 144 (2024)
- Merritt v. State, 323 Ga. 23, 27 (2025)
- Long v. State, 309 Ga. 721, 726 (2020)
- Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436 (1966)