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IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF NORTH CAROLINA

No. COA25-909

Filed 21 October 2026

Wake County, No. 21CR219268-910

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA,

v.

TERRENCE PIERRE LAWSON, Defendant.

Appeal by Defendant from judgment and commitment entered 6 May 2024 by Judge Gale M. Adams in Wake County Superior Court. Heard in the Court of Appeals 29 September 2026.

Attorney General Jeff Jackson, by Special Deputy Attorney General Robert C. Ennis, for the State.

Jarvis John Edgerton, IV, for Defendant.

GRIFFIN, Judge.

Defendant Terrence Pierre Lawson appeals from a judgment and commitment entered after a jury found him guilty of first-degree murder. Defendant argues the trial court erred when it found Defendant had opened the door to the State questioning him on cross examination about specific acts of prior violence. We dismiss.

I. Factual and Procedural Background

On 26 August 2021, Edward Outlaw was shot in his bedroom, in Raleigh, and then died from those wounds.

Mr. Outlaw's wife, Alma Gilarranz, testified that the couple was asleep in their bedroom while their four daughters slept in another room. Ms. Gilarranz testified that a masked intruder entered the couple's bedroom carrying one of their infants. According to Ms. Gilarranz, the intruder was asking for money and pointing a gun at the infant. Eventually, the intruder dropped the child and shot Mr. Outlaw multiple times. Afterwards, the intruder fled and Ms. Gilarranz called 911 at approximately 5:42 a.m. Ms. Gilarranz spoke to law enforcement after the incident and described the intruder as a black male approximately 5 foot 8 inches tall.

Cell phone data placed a phone associated with Defendant in the area of the shooting on the morning of 26 August 2021 between 4:41 a.m. and 4:58 a.m. The cell phone data showed the cell phone moved from Raleigh to Greensboro shortly after the shooting took place. Defendant was arrested and charged with first-degree murder.

At trial, Defendant testified that he met Mr. Outlaw several years prior at Warren Correctional Prison. Defendant stated he had previously visited Mr. Outlaw in Raleigh on 23 August 2021 to purchase fentanyl, and on 25 August 2021 around

7:00 p.m., the two spoke over the phone about traveling to New York together to purchase fentanyl.

Defendant was to arrive at Mr. Outlaw's apartment complex at 7:00 a.m. on 26 August 2021. Law enforcement also recovered Facebook messages between the two men in which they discussed traveling together to purchase more drugs out of town. Defendant testified he left Greensboro around 3:00–3:30 a.m. to drive to Raleigh and that he waited in his car for almost two hours until he saw a person dressed in all black running from Mr. Outlaw's building with a gun.

Defendant stated that this sight caused him to drive away from the apartment complex because it would be hard to explain to the police that were arriving on scene why had been smoking marijuana and had nearly \$40,000 in cash. Defendant drove away when multiple police cars began arriving on scene and did not contact Mr. Outlaw later in the day to check whether they were still going to conduct their scheduled business.

Defendant's trial testimony detailed his history of criminal activity. While discussing Defendant's specific actions on direct examination, the topic of enforcement came up:

Q. Okay. And had you ever made money as an enforcer?

A. Not really.

Q. All right. What does not really mean? You kind of hesitated there. What does that mean?

A. I didn't have - - I didn't have - - I didn't have scary people. Just, like, just hold me down, I'm going to throw you some change, but I didn't call it a enforcer. I haven't put hands on nobody.

Outside the presence of the jury, the State argued Defendant's testimony asserting he was a non-violent person opened the door to previously excluded evidence of violence. The trial court decided to allow the State to ask Defendant about an unrelated shooting of a man in Greensboro named Brandon Smith but instructed the State not to get into the details, specifically that Mr. Smith died from the shooting. The State asked Defendant if he shot Mr. Smith, Defendant testified he did shoot Mr. Smith "[p]robably about a month" after Mr. Outlaw was shot on 26 August 2021. Defendant did not object to this testimony.

The jury convicted Defendant of first-degree murder. Defendant gave oral notice of appeal.

II. Analysis

Defendant contends that the trial court erred when it found Defendant had opened the door to the State questioning him on cross examination about specific acts of prior violence. Defendant has failed to adequately preserve this issue for appellate review.

Our Rules of Appellate Procedure state that "[i]n order to preserve an issue for appellate review, a party must have presented to the trial court a timely request, objection, or motion, stating the specific grounds for the ruling the party desired the

court to make if the specific grounds were not apparent from the context.” N.C. R. App. P. 10(a)(1). “To be timely, an objection to the admission of evidence must be made ‘at the time it is actually introduced at trial.’” *State v. Snead*, 368 N.C. 811, 816, 783 S.E.2d 733, 737 (2016) (quoting *State v. Ray*, 364 N.C. 272, 277 & n.1, 697 S.E.2d 319, 322 & n.1 (2010)).

“It is insufficient to object only to the presenting party’s forecast of the evidence.” *Ray*, 364 N.C. at 277, 697 S.E.2d at 322. “An objection made ‘only during a hearing out of the jury’s presence prior to the actual introduction of the testimony’ is insufficient.” *Snead*, 368 N.C. at 816, 783 S.E.2d at 737 (citations omitted). To preserve a trial court’s decision to admit testimony for appellate review, an objection to the testimony at issue “must be contemporaneous with the time such testimony is offered into evidence[,]” and the objection must be made in the presence of the jury. *Ray*, 364 N.C. at 277, 697 S.E.2d at 322 (citations omitted).

Prior to trial, the trial court agreed to exclude evidence of the Greensboro shooting under Rules 403 and 404(b). The trial court determined that the facts were insufficiently similar to the present matter and that the prejudicial effect substantially outweighed the probative value.

At trial, Defendant stated, “I haven’t put hands on nobody.” Following this statement made on direct examination, the State argued, outside the presence of the jury, that Defendant had opened the door to admission of evidence of the Greensboro

shooting by asserting he is not a violent person. Defendant argued the evidence would be propensity evidence and that Defendant did not open the door.

Ultimately, the trial court determined the language used by Defendant asserted he was not a violent person and therefore, Defendant had opened the door for the State to ask about shooting Mr. Smith. On cross examination, the State explicitly asked Defendant, two times, if he shot Mr. Smith. Each time, Defendant replied in the affirmative.

Defendant did not object to the questions regarding the Greensboro shooting. As Defendant did not make a contemporaneous objection to the admission of specific acts of prior violence in the presence of the jury, the issue has not been properly preserved for appellate review.

An unpreserved issue may still be appealed for plain error. *State v. Velasco*, 297 N.C. App. 885, 892, 912 S.E.2d 859, 864 (2025). However, Defendant has not alleged plain error in his arguments to this Court. Therefore, Defendant has waived appellate review on such grounds. See N.C. R. App. P. 10(a)(4); N.C. R. App. P. 28(b)(6); *State v. Thibodeaux*, 352 N.C. 570, 582, 532 S.E.2d 797, 806 (2000).

III. Conclusion

For the aforementioned reasons, we dismiss.

DISMISSED.

Judges ARROWOOD and FREEMAN concur.

Report per Rule 30(e).