

Meek Mill's Criminal Case Ends With a Misdemeanor Guilty Plea

The rapper, who has become a symbol of criminal justice reform, will serve no additional prison time and will no longer be on probation.



By Joe Coscarelli

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The Philadelphia rapper Meek Mill, who has become a symbol of criminal justice reform, as well as an outspoken advocate, pleaded guilty on Tuesday to a misdemeanor gun charge stemming from a 2007 arrest, ending a legal saga that has sent him to prison multiple times during more than a decade of probation and appeals.

Meek Mill, born Robert Rihmeek Williams, will not serve any additional prison time and will no longer be on probation, said his lawyer, Joe Tacopina, in an interview.

“What happens now is he begins his life,” Mr. Tacopina said. “For the first time since he was a teenager, he’s not under probation, he’s not under any supervision. It’s the first time in his adult life that he’ll be able to go somewhere without asking permission.”

The guilty plea to a misdemeanor charge — possession of a firearm — came after a Pennsylvania appeals court ruled in July that Mr. Williams would be granted a new trial and a new judge, overturning his 2008 conviction. Prosecutors for the district attorney’s office had backed Mr. Williams’s requests, telling the court that the office could no longer call its lone witness in the case, a Philadelphia police officer who had been found guilty by the department of lying and theft.

As part of the plea deal, additional charges against Mr. Williams — including drug possession and the charge that he pointed a gun at an officer during his 2007 arrest — were dropped, Mr. Tacopina and the district attorney’s office said.

In a statement on Tuesday, Meek Mill said: “I’m extremely grateful that my long legal battle is finally behind me and I appreciate that it has sparked a much-needed discussion about probation reform and the inequalities that exist within our two Americas. I have always told the truth — that as a teenager, who saw many around me die from senseless gun violence, I

carried a gun for protection. I take responsibility for that and — in conjunction with my work on the REFORM Alliance — I'll continue to use my platform to make communities safer and reform our criminal justice system.”

Larry Krasner, the Philadelphia district attorney, said in a statement that Mr. Williams had been “unfairly treated in a case that exemplifies the destruction caused by excessive supervision, instances of corruption, and unfair processes in our criminal courts.”

Mr. Krasner added: “Mr. Williams has demonstrated significant rehabilitation; he has evolved and grown. This office commends him both for taking responsibility for his crime and for his work to improve society by changing a criminal justice system that too often lacks integrity, is biased, is unfair, and is overly punitive in ways that make us all less safe.”

The rapper also thanked Jay-Z, the Roc Nation chief operating officer Desiree Perez and the businessman Michael Rubin, a part owner of the Philadelphia 76ers, each of whom backed his public and legal fights over the years.

The case became a widespread cause célèbre in 2017, after Meek Mill was sentenced to four years in prison for technical violations of his probation, including two arrests that did not result in convictions. The rapper served five months before he was granted bail, setting off this latest round of appeals.

Best known for songs like “Dreams and Nightmares” and “Ima Boss,” Meek Mill released his fourth studio album, “Championships,” last year, reaching the top of the Billboard album chart. In July, he announced that he was starting a record label, Dream Chasers, under the corporate umbrella of Jay-Z's entertainment Roc Nation.

Joe Coscarelli is a culture reporter with a focus on pop music. His work seeks to pull back the curtain on how hit songs and emerging artists are discovered, made and marketed. He previously worked at New York magazine and The Village Voice. More about Joe Coscarelli

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