

NON-PRECEDENTIAL DECISION - SEE SUPERIOR COURT O.P. 65.37

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA	:	IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF
	:	PENNSYLVANIA
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
	:	
QUAZA LOPEZ	:	
	:	
	:	
Appellant	:	No. 3245 EDA 2025

Appeal from the Judgment of Sentence Entered October 20, 2025
In the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County Criminal Division at
No(s): CP-51-CR-0001419-2024

BEFORE: LAZARUS, P.J., PANELLA, P.J.E., and STEVENS, P.J.E.*

MEMORANDUM BY PANELLA, P.J.E.:

FILED OCTOBER 29, 2026

Quaza Lopez appeals from the judgment of sentence imposed on October 20, 2025, for his convictions of one count of conspiracy to commit murder, three counts of first-degree murder, four counts of recklessly endangering another person, and one count each of firearms not to be carried without a license, carrying firearms on public streets or public property in Philadelphia, and possessing instruments of crime.¹ Lopez challenges the sufficiency and weight of the evidence. After careful review, we affirm.

We obtained the following procedural and factual history from the certified record. At approximately 6:00 p.m. on August 11, 2023, five people

* Former Justice specially assigned to the Superior Court.

¹ 18 Pa.C.S.A. §§ 903, 2502(a), 2705, 6106, 6108, and 907, respectively.

entered the basketball courts located at 8th and Diamond Streets in the city of Philadelphia. These people fanned out, pulled firearms, and shot at the individuals who were on the basketball court. A total of 75 fired cartridge casings were later discovered by police. Three men died as a result of this shooting, one man was injured, and multiple people had to run and take cover to avoid the massacre.

Police obtained numerous surveillance videos during their investigation into the shooting. One video captured the shooting, but the perpetrators were all wearing masks. However, police were able to identify the vehicle, a Chevrolet Silverado, that the perpetrators arrived in and subsequently used to flee the area. Police later tracked the Silverado on surveillance cameras and obtained footage prior to and after the shooting. Using this footage, police were able to positively identify Lopez as one of the shooters. Police further obtained Lopez's cell phone and searched it, along with his social media accounts, that linked him to his co-defendants and this shooting.

Lopez was charged with the above-noted crimes and proceeded to a jury trial, held jointly with four co-defendants. At the conclusion of trial, the jury was hung as to co-defendant Tynel Love, found co-defendant Sufyaan Kinslow not guilty, and found Lopez, co-defendant Eric Reid, and co-defendant Tyyon Bates guilty of all charges. On October 20, 2025, the same day the jury returned its verdict, the court sentenced Lopez to three consecutive life sentences plus 24 to 48 years of incarceration.

Lopez filed a timely post-sentence motion, which the trial court denied on December 10, 2025. Lopez filed a timely notice of appeal to this Court. The trial court did not order Lopez to file a Rule 1925(b) statement due to its impending retirement from the bench. **See** Trial Court Opinion, 12/16/25 (single page); Pa.R.A.P. 1925(b). The trial court referred this Court to its opinion and order denying Lopez's post-sentence motion in lieu of a Rule 1925(a) opinion. **See id.**; Pa.R.A.P. 1925(a).

Lopez raises two questions for our review:

I. Whether [Lopez's] convictions for 3 counts of first degree murder and related offenses were against the weight of the evidence and shocking to one's sense of justice where there were no eyewitnesses to the shooting that could identify [Lopez] as being present at the shooting scene, where the police officers who identified [Lopez] as being present at locations other than the shooting scene could not identify [Lopez] in the video of the shooting, where the video was not clear enough to make an identification, where no flash information was received by the police matching [Lopez's] description, where there were no fingerprints, DNA or other physical evidence linking [Lopez] to the get away vehicle and where the last person seen taking possession of the get away vehicle was an individual other than [Lopez]?

II. Whether [Lopez's] adjudication of guilt for 3 counts of first degree murder is based upon insufficient evidence where the Commonwealth failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that [Lopez] possessed the requisite mental state needed for first degree murder[?]

Appellant's Brief, at 6 (unnecessary capitalization and lower court answers omitted).

We begin with our standard of review regarding weight of the evidence claims:

Appellate review of a weight claim is a review of the exercise of the trial court's discretion, not of the underlying question of whether the verdict is against the weight of the evidence. Because the trial court had the opportunity to hear and see the evidence presented, an appellate court will give the gravest consideration to the findings and reasons advanced by the trial court when reviewing a trial court's determination that the verdict is, or is not, against the weight of the evidence. One of the least assailable reasons for granting or denying a new trial is the trial court's conviction that the verdict was, or was not, against the weight of the evidence and that a new trial should be granted in the interest of justice.

A trial court abuses its discretion where the course pursued represents not merely an error of judgment, but where the judgment is manifestly unreasonable or where the law is not applied or where the record shows that the action is a result of partiality, prejudice, bias, or ill-will. By comparison, the role of the trial court is to determine whether, notwithstanding all the evidence, certain facts are so clearly of greater weight that to ignore them, or to give them equal weight with all the facts, is to deny justice. For an appellant to prevail on a weight of the evidence claim, the evidence must be so tenuous, vague, and uncertain that the verdict shocks the conscience of the trial court.

Commonwealth v. Hernandez, 359 A.3d 39, 47 (Pa. Super. 2026) (citation omitted).

The trial court here found the verdict was not against the weight of the evidence:

[Lopez's] weight arguments are frivolous, since the evidence overwhelmingly established that he was one of the shooters. This included surveillance video showing [Lopez], along with codefendant Tyyon Bates, purchasing a white Chevy Silverado, the murder vehicle. That the vehicle in question was the murder vehicle was demonstrated by surveillance video before and after the shooting showing the vehicle and a license plate reader which captured the plate number. In addition, video surveillance of the vacant lot where the shooters parked the murder vehicle showed [Lopez] getting out of the vehicle shortly after the murders occurred. He is clearly seen directly under the lot's surveillance

camera, and had distinctive light-colored tips on his braids. Three officers who knew [Lopez] identified him from that video. Moreover, the video from the lot shows [Lopez] carrying codefendant Bates, who had been accidentally shot by one of his coconspirators during the attack at the playground. All of this was corroborated by [Lopez's] cellphone data, social media, and text messages with codefendants.

Accordingly, the verdicts were completely supported by compelling evidence and did not shock the conscience of the court. [Lopez's] weight claims are therefore meritless.

Opinion and Order Denying Post-Sentence Motion, 12/10/25, at 5 (unnecessary capitalization omitted).

We cannot find the trial court abused its discretion. Lopez argues the evidence was circumstantial. **See** Appellant's Brief, at 13. The jury heard all the evidence and Lopez's argument that the Commonwealth's case was circumstantial. **See** N.T. Trial, 10/16/25, at 156-166. The jury saw the surveillance videos, read through the text messages and social media posts, and heard the evidence against Lopez. The trial court did not find the evidence so tenuous and vague to be shocking to its conscience; we agree with the trial court. There was significant circumstantial evidence establishing Lopez was one of the shooters. Although the evidence was circumstantial, the trial court was accurate in saying "the evidence overwhelmingly established that [Lopez] was one of the shooters" and therefore, his weight of the evidence claim fails.

Finally, Lopez asserts the evidence was insufficient to establish he had the specific intent to kill to support his convictions for first degree murder. **See** Appellant's Brief, at 15. He claims his actions show merely "extreme

recklessness and a wanton disregard for a foreseeable and unjustified risk that others would die.” ***Id.*** We disagree.

A claim challenging the sufficiency of the evidence is a question of law. Accordingly, our standard of review is de novo, and our scope of review is plenary. In reviewing a sufficiency challenge, we determine whether the evidence at trial, and all reasonable inferences derived therefrom, when viewed in the light most favorable to the Commonwealth as verdict winner, is sufficient to establish all elements of the offense beyond a reasonable doubt. Further, a conviction may be sustained wholly on circumstantial evidence, and the trier of fact—while passing on the credibility of the witnesses and the weight of the evidence—is free to believe all, part, or none of the evidence. In conducting this review, the appellate court may not weigh the evidence and substitute its judgment for the factfinder.

Hernandez, 359 A.3d at 48 (brackets and citation omitted).

Because Lopez challenges his convictions for three counts of murder of the first degree on insufficiency grounds, we must review the elements of murder of the first degree:

Murder of the first degree is an intentional killing. The Crimes Code defines intentional killing as a willful, deliberate and premeditated killing of another person. To sustain a conviction for first-degree murder, the Commonwealth must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that: (1) a human being was unlawfully killed; (2) the defendant, in fact, did the killing; (3) the defendant acted with a specific intent to kill; and (4) the killing was done with premeditation and deliberation. The Commonwealth may prove the specific intent to kill solely through circumstantial evidence. Relevant in the present case is the precept that a jury may infer the specific intent to kill based upon the defendant’s use of a deadly weapon on a vital part of the victim’s body. The specific intent to kill can be formed in a fraction of a second.

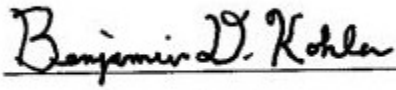
Commonwealth v. Rodriguez, 340 A.3d 334, 348 (Pa. Super. 2025) (quotation marks and citations omitted).

Our Supreme Court has explained that the use of a deadly weapon on a vital body part must be intentional. ***See Commonwealth v. Holt***, 273 A.3d 514, 529 (Pa. 2022) (“There is no doubt that intentionally striking a vital part of the body with a deadly weapon is, by itself, sufficient for a fact-finder to infer the specific intent to kill.”). We find the circumstances here establish Lopez intended to strike a vital body part when he and four co-conspirators opened fire at a basketball court.

The evidence, viewed in the light most favorable to the Commonwealth as verdict winner, established that Lopez, along with four co-conspirators, planned to go to the basketball court to shoot at individuals who were believed to be part of a group that shot co-defendant Bates’s younger brother and Lopez’s uncle. ***See*** N.T. Trial, 10/9/25, at 28-29. Police recovered 75 fired cartridge casings at the basketball court. ***See id.*** at 50. Three people were killed, one was injured, and homes and vehicles were hit by the gunfire. ***See*** N.T. Trial, 10/8/25, at 20-21; N.T. Trial, 10/9/25, at 50-52. The magnitude of fired cartridge cases provides sufficient circumstantial evidence that Lopez intended to use a firearm on a vital part of the body, thereby allowing the jury to infer his intent to kill. As such, Lopez’s final claim is meritless, and we affirm the judgment of sentence.

Judgment of sentence affirmed.

Judgment Entered.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Benjamin D. Kohler", is written over a horizontal line.

Benjamin D. Kohler, Esq.
Prothonotary

Date: 10/29/2026