

Convicted murderer and rapist sentenced

Juwaun Terry Stewart gets life in prison plus 20 years

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A Frederick County judge on Monday sentenced a man to life in prison, plus 20 years, for raping and killing a woman in her Brunswick home early last year.

Juwaun Terry Stewart, 18, pleaded guilty on Feb. 19 to the first-degree rape and murder of Tammy Sue Coates, 61, on Jan. 17, 2024. Stewart was 17 years old at the time, but was charged as an adult.

Prosecutors have said that Stewart committed the crime after Coates did not allow him to clean the snow off her car in exchange for money.

During the sentencing hearing on Monday, Chief Assistant State's Attorney Lindsey Carpenter described how Stewart used a butter knife to stab and cut Coates in the neck, cheek and temple.

An autopsy determined that Coates also had injuries consistent with strangulation and blunt force trauma to the head, Carpenter told the court.

"This crime is truly a community's nightmare — a complete stranger, in broad daylight, in the safety of her own home," Carpenter said.

Coates' daughter Kimberly, who found her mother's body five days after the murder, and Coates' niece Amanda, who spoke to her aunt over the phone on the day of the murder, gave victim impact statements during the hearing on Monday. Both women were only identified by first name in court.

"Finding my mother in the

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state that I did completely changed me," Kimberly said, adding that she is now nervous to go anywhere on her own and cannot sleep without having nightmares.

Kimberly said there was no way to explain her mother's death to her son, whose Nana was "his best friend."

Amanda described her aunt as "the glue that kept my family together." She said her aunt would often send people a "love you" text to let them know she was thinking of them.

Because of Stewart's actions, Amanda said, she now has severe anxiety about someone breaking into her home and harming her family.

"I don't trust anyone anymore because of what happened to my aunt," she said.

Linda Zeit, Stewart's public defender, told the court on Monday that her client has taken responsibility for his actions by pleading guilty, meaning Coates' family did not have to endure a trial.

In exchange for Stewart's plea, the Frederick County State's Attorney's Office declined to prosecute Stewart on a number of other felony charges, including two counts of first-degree assault and one count each of first-degree burglary, robbery, home invasion and theft.

Mental health history

Zeit told the court that Stewart's life has been "difficult, to say the least." He was removed from his mother's custody as a child due to abuse and was primarily raised by his grandmother, Zeit said.

When he was 15, Stewart found his mother dead from a drug overdose. His father died in 2021 as a result of a car crash, Zeit said.

According to Zeit, Stewart also has a history of hospitalizations, mental health diagnoses and involvement with the Department of Juvenile Services.

Maggie Shearin, the grandmother who raised Stewart, spoke on her grandson's behalf during the sentencing hearing on Monday.

Shearin offered her condolences to Coates' family and referenced her own son, who she said was shot and killed at a young age.

"I know what it is to lose someone in violence," she said.

Shearin asked Circuit Judge Scott Rolle for leniency in sentencing Stewart, saying she tried to seek help from the courts with her grandson's psychiatric problems, but "it didn't happen."

"I pray that he can do the right things and get his mind straight," Shearin said.

When given the opportunity to speak on his own behalf, Stewart declined, stating "I'll hold my peace." Zeit said Stewart wrote a letter to the court, but it was not read aloud.

In his comments before sentencing Stewart, Rolle said it was "difficult to even listen to the facts of this case."

"I could only imagine what went through her mind when it became clear that this was how her life was going to end," Rolle said of Coates.

Rolle ultimately sentenced Stewart to the agreed-upon sentence of life in prison for the murder charge and 20 years in prison for the rape charge. He ordered that the sentences be served consecutively, rather than at the same time.

Maryland law prohibits life sentences without the possibility of parole as punishment for crimes committed by juveniles, so Stewart will eventually become eligible for parole.

State's Attorney Charlie Smith said in a phone interview on Monday that Stewart will not become eligible for parole on the life sentence for murder until he has served 20 years in prison.

If paroled on the life sentence, Smith said, Stewart would have to serve another 10 years in prison before becoming eligible for parole on the 20-year sentence for rape.

As a result, the earliest that Stewart could be released from prison is 2054. If released early, he would still have to register as a sex offender for life.

Smith said Stewart's crime is proof that "teenagers are still capable of extremely heinous, extremely violent offenses."

"Our prosecutors knew the severity of this case, and we sought the harshest sentence possible," Smith said. "We have no control over the law or when offenders of any age can be paroled."