

## **DEADLY SLIP - ANSWERS, PREVENTION ARE NEEDED ON RELEASE OF RAPIST**

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Two women in Highland Park are dead, apparently because a few people didn't do their jobs.

Any one of them, with a little diligence, could have prevented the early release of a rapist who allegedly murdered the two women.

Michael Lee Anthony should have remained in prison until at least 2007. But he walked in 1996, after serving a 5- to 10-year sentence for assault, even though he had also been sentenced to another 15 to 30 years for a 1991 rape and robbery conviction.

There's plenty of blame to go around, as the Free Press reported last week.

A judge's order of sentence apparently was never delivered to Corrections by Wayne County Circuit Court or the Sheriff's Department.

When Anthony himself told corrections officials about the rape and robbery case, they sent letters to the court and prosecutor's office. The court didn't respond and the prosecutor's office sent back a form letter indicating the case had been closed.

Technically, that may let the Department of Corrections off the hook. Even so, with two convictions on Anthony's record, you'd think someone would have done a little extra work to make certain there weren't two sentence orders.

Sen. William Van Regenmorter, R-Hudsonville, who heads the Senate Judiciary Committee, says he will ask the agencies involved to explain what happened. He should make those findings public, and then decide if any corrective action is needed.

This case appears to be a horrible aberration, not a systemic problem. But the Legislature needs to give a full accounting -- and make sure everyone in criminal justice knows that the system works only if they do.

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