

FAMILIES TENSE, AWAITING VERDICT IN SLAYINGS - PAPERWORK MISTAKE FREED SUSPECT FROM JAIL

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Michael Lee Anthony was supposed to be in prison last winter for rape. Because of someone's mistake, **Anthony** was free.

Soon, he will learn whether he will spend the rest of his life behind bars. He is charged with killing two women, and if convicted of first-degree murder in their deaths, state law requires a life term.

A jury began deliberating Friday in the trial of **Anthony**, who was arrested in January after two bodies were found in his basement bedroom in Highland Park.

One woman, Tina Wallace, 36, was bound inside a freezer near the foot of his bed. The other woman, Toya Hill, 30, of Mt. Clemens lay dead in an adjacent room under a pile of clothes. The women had been asphyxiated, and both bodies were badly decomposed.

At the time, **Anthony**, 54, was supposed to have been serving a 15-to-30-year sentence for the rape and robbery of a Detroit woman in 1991.

But because his sentence was never recorded by the Michigan Department of Corrections, **Anthony** was free last winter. Authorities have never explained how the error occurred. **Anthony** has since been ordered to serve the sentence.

Now the dead women's families are waiting to learn whether the jury believes he is the killer. Deliberations are to continue Monday.

"I feel tense," said Larry Wallace of Ferndale, the brother of Tina Wallace. It took until June for authorities to identify her through dental records. Her family said she had been missing from her Highland Park home since March 2001.

Larry Wallace said he thought relief would come with news of her whereabouts, even if she hadn't survived.

But, he said, "it seems like it's worse now. We know exactly how it happened to her. . . . She really suffered."

Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Kam Towns told jurors Friday in her closing argument that **Anthony** hated women and assaulted several. She said **Anthony** suffocated or strangled Wallace and Hill, and kept their bodies nearby "almost like trophies."

"Maybe that's how he wanted it," Towns said.

The prosecutor's case is circumstantial. There are no known witnesses to the killings, and no fingerprints or DNA were found. But Towns argued that the evidence points to **Anthony** .

His lawyer, Mark Haidar, told the jury that **Anthony** was in a hospital being treated for an infected hand when the bodies were found, suggesting that someone else killed them and dumped them in his bedroom.

Neighbors and relatives testified that **Anthony** 's bedroom was a neighborhood hangout, with people coming in and out to smoke crack and have sex.

"It's only when he's gone for three weeks that those bodies are discovered?" Haidar asked jurors. "That isn't strange?"

But Towns said **Anthony** was like a master of ceremonies, controlling access to his room.

Jurors deliberated for less than two hours before breaking Friday. **Anthony** has not been in attendance for much of the trial. Judge Prentis Edwards barred him after several outbursts at witnesses, the judge and the prosecutor.

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Caption: Photo

Michael Lee Anthony is charged with murder.

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Page: 8A

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