

Man sentenced to life for killing, burning of girlfriend and baby

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PONTIAC -- A Detroit man who killed his girlfriend and then set her and their 2-month-old baby on fire to avoid child support payments was sentenced today to mandatory life in prison for the deaths.

Jimmie Reed Jr ., 31, was convicted last month of first-degree murder, arson and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony in the July 20, 2006 deaths of Markeda Byas, 31, and their child, Arctavia **Reed** .

"The sadness is the cries that left the apartment ... we are all going to hear those cries," said a visibly moved Oakland County Circuit Judge Fred M. Mester as he sentenced **Reed** to life in prison without parole. "The child could have been saved if he had thought of some human being besides himself."

Reed stood quietly through the sentencing as several of the victims' relatives and friends choked back tears. When Mester asked **Reed** if he had anything to say on his own behalf or to the victims' family, **Reed** just shook his head indicating "no."

An investigation found that **Reed** fatally shot Byas in her apartment on Walton Boulevard, then returned to the house, doused the bed where she and the baby slept with gasoline, and set it on fire. An autopsy determined the girl died of burns and smoke inhalation.

Reed initially denied any involvement in the deaths or being at the apartment when he was first interviewed by police investigators. Several days later he voluntarily returned to the police department and in police interviews admitted shooting Byas in the head but said it was an accident.

Reed also told police that several hours after the shooting he purchased some gasoline and returned to the apartment where he poured it on Byas and the baby and then lit a match.

The investigation revealed **Reed** was concerned about having to pay child support for the child, whose first name he couldn't even spell to police.

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