

RAPIST SKIPPED 15-YEAR SENTENCE - NOW MAN, 54, IS ACCUSED OF KILLING, HIDING 2 WOMEN

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A man charged with murdering two women and living with their corpses in Highland Park should have been behind bars for rape at the time the women were killed, according to court records and authorities.

Murder suspect **Michael Lee Anthony** should be serving a 15- to 30-year sentence for rape and robbery, Wayne County Circuit Court records show. But the Michigan Department of Corrections says it has no record of that sentence, handed down in 1991.

"We believe he should have been in prison through at least 2011," Wayne County assistant prosecutor **Michael Cox** said Thursday evening.

But because the sentence didn't get recorded by the prison system, **Anthony** was free when police arrived at his home Saturday and found two bodies in his basement.

Corrections spokesman Matt Davis said the department was not to blame because it never received confirmation of the conviction and sentence.

Cox said his office will file a motion in Wayne County Circuit Court today asking that the Department of Corrections "be ordered to incarcerate Mr. **Anthony** as he should have been."

Cox declined further comment.

The two women **Anthony** is accused of killing remained unidentified. Police found their bodies in the basement of a two-family flat on Grove Avenue. Autopsies determined that they were asphyxiated, probably late last year. **Anthony** is charged with two counts of first-degree murder in their deaths.

In October 1991, while serving a 5- to 10-year sentence for a 1990 assault, **Anthony** pleaded guilty to two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct for raping a woman in May 1991 in front of an apartment at 3rd and Whitmore in Detroit. **Anthony**, 54, also pleaded guilty to robbing her at knifepoint and to a charge of being a habitual offender, records show.

Judge Leonard Townsend ordered **Anthony** to remain imprisoned for 15 to 30 years beyond the sentence he was already serving.

But in 1996, **Anthony** walked free, Davis said.

While in prison, **Anthony** brought the 1991 rape-and-robbery convictions to the attention of corrections officials, Davis said after reviewing **Anthony**'s file Thursday night.

In late 1991 and early 1992, Davis said, the department sent letters to the court and prosecutor's office requesting confirmation of those convictions.

Davis said the prosecutor's office responded with a form letter that indicated the case was "dismissed/adjudicated not guilty or otherwise closed."

Davis said corrections officials thought that meant the rape-and-robbery case had been dropped. Otherwise, Davis said, "he definitely would have been in prison" today.

A review of Wayne County Circuit Court records Thursday confirmed that there is a Judgment of Sentence form filed in **Anthony**'s rape-and-robbery case. The form is signed by Townsend and a deputy court clerk in his office. Davis said that by procedure, a copy of that form is sent to the Department of Corrections, which records the information.

It was unclear whether the department received the form in **Anthony**'s case.

Contacted Thursday night, Townsend said he was amazed that **Anthony** had not gone to prison.

"That has never happened before and they're just finding out about it -- I'm shocked," Townsend said.

When the story broke about the murders, Townsend said **Anthony**'s name didn't register with him. No one has asked him anything about **Anthony** since the trial.

"I thought he was gone once he left the jail," Townsend said. "He should still be in."

The form filed in circuit court appears incomplete because it does not list all the charges on which **Anthony** was convicted, but it does clearly state the length of the sentence and that it is to run consecutively to **Anthony**'s earlier assault conviction.

Prosecutors vowed to pursue the new murder charges against **Anthony** regardless of what happens with the rape-and-robbery sentence.

In the murder case, **Anthony** allegedly kept the bodies in the basement without the knowledge of a brother and his 80-year-old mother, who lived upstairs. Authorities said **Anthony** kept a door locked to the upstairs and would enter the basement through an outside door.

Police went to the home in the 300 block of Grove after getting a tip, then found one body in a freezer covered with clothes. The other body was decaying in another room under a pile of clothing and appeared to have been there for several months, police said.

A rope was found with the body in the freezer, which officials said appeared to have been used to strangle the woman.

The Wayne County medical examiner was trying to identify the bodies using fingerprints and dental records. Two families have come forward with information about missing relatives, but police would not identify them.

Cox has said **Anthony** provided no information on the identity of the women or his alleged role in their deaths.

During his arraignment Wednesday on the murder charges and one count of being a habitual offender, **Anthony** declared himself "a black Jesus."

As sheriff's deputies led him in leg chains to a wooden bench, **Anthony** said, "This system is a laugh. A real joke. That's the honest truth. You're such important people. It's a big joke, big joke."

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Michael Lee Anthony

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