

DETROIT: ' SHE'S JUST COLD-BLOODED ' - GRIEF-STRICKEN FATHER OF YOUNG VICTIM ERUPTS IN COURT KILLERS SENTENCED 2 GET LIFE IN PRISON

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, November 1, 2007

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Darren Johnson Sr. was incredulous.

Sonya O'Neal, the woman convicted of fatally shooting Johnson's 11-year-old son and the boy's 13-year-old cousin, stood up in court during her sentencing Wednesday and shouted: "Look, I'm no child killer."

Enraged, Johnson charged at O'Neal, screaming: "You killed my son."

Sheriff's deputies in the Wayne County circuit courtroom quickly grabbed the hulking 38-year-old man and pulled him into the hallway.

He continued yelling: "You killed my son."

Jurors apparently agreed with the grief-stricken father two weeks ago, when O'Neal and her accomplice Robert Reed, 37, were convicted on first-degree murder charges for the Feb. 23 shooting deaths of Darren Johnson Jr. of Oak Park and his cousin Orlando Herron of Detroit.

In an emotional hearing Wednesday, Judge Craig Strong sentenced both defendants to mandatory life in prison sentences.

Afterward, Johnson told the Free Press he would have attacked O'Neal had he been able to get to her.

"Something came over me," he said. " **She's just cold-blooded** , and she still doesn't want to admit what she did."

O'Neal did get another chance to address the courtroom after Johnson's removal, and again denied responsibility.

"I did not kill those kids. Period," she said. "But I'm gonna pay the price."

Reed likewise denied any involvement. He wept as he begged the families of Orlando and Darren to believe him.

"I been in this county jail, falsely arrested," Reed said. "I'm reaching out. I love them children. Believe that."

Strong shook his head in disgust while handing down the mandatory life sentences. But he also rebuked family members of the two boys for allowing them to be in a house where Ronell Thompson, the boys' cousin, sold drugs.

"There's a lot of blame here," Strong said. "Why would Ronell have the children in a house that he has drugs in and drug proceeds? He should have never have brought those children into this environment."

Another suspect, Charles Moore, pleaded guilty before the trial to second-degree murder charges. He testified that O'Neal shot the boys in the back of the head during a botched robbery at a west side Detroit home on Mansfield Street. Three other men who agreed to plea deals on their involvement are to be sentenced next month.

Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Christine Kowal said O'Neal, Reed, Moore and three other defendants hatched a plan to kidnap Thompson, an admitted drug dealer, and rob him of cocaine and cash.

After arranging a cocaine buy from Thompson, O'Neal and the others tied him up, tossed him in a trunk and drove back to his home on Mansfield, where the two boys were hanging out playing video games.

Moore testified that the defendants ransacked the Mansfield home looking for drugs and money, and left after O'Neal shot the boys and Reed shot Thompson, who survived.

Orlando's brother, Earl, 18, and cousin Jayvon Scarber, 15, who both were at the home, were roughed up in the basement by some of the defendants, but not seriously injured.

During the victim's impact portion of the sentencing Wednesday, Darren Jr.'s mother Allyson Howard trembled as she addressed both defendants.

"How can you sit here and still be so cold?" she asked O'Neal while sobbing. "And still you won't even admit to what you did."

Assistant Prosecutor Kowal held up pictures of both boys as she addressed O'Neal.

"We'll never know if Orlando cures cancer or Darren becomes the next Bill Gates because she killed them in cold blood," Kowal said of O'Neal. "She needs to live a long life, and she needs to suffer every day of that life."

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MEMO: SHORTER VERSION RAN IN METRO FINAL EDITION, PAGE 3B.

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Edition: METRO EDITION

Section: NWS; NEWS

Page: 1B

Index Terms: homicide; juvenile victim; Darren Johnson; Orlando Herron; date;Sonya O'Neal;
sentencing; Robert Reed

Record Number: dfp0000498918

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