

KILLER OF PAL GETS MAXIMUM TERM

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Brian Black , who pleaded guilty to manslaughter for executing his best friend -- a murder suspect who asked to be killed rather than return to jail -- was sentenced Thursday to the maximum of eight to 15 years in prison.

Before the 18-year-old was sentenced, a tearful Virginia Shelton, mother of slaying victim Lorenzo Shelton III, pleaded to Wayne County Circuit Judge Maggie Drake for leniency.

"Lorenzo loved Brian, Brian loved Lorenzo," she said of the youths, who both lived with her in southwest Detroit. "Lorenzo had told me that if he ever had to go back to jail he would take his own life.... If Brian did this, he did it because Lorenzo asked him."

Lorenzo Shelton's bullet-riddled corpse was found soon after Shelton shot to death his girlfriend and two of her Lincoln Park classmates, police say. The girlfriend had told him she was probably pregnant and wouldn't get an abortion, her friends said.

Shelton at first told police the slayings were a drive-by shooting. Black told police that Shelton asked him for help because Shelton wanted to die rather than return to jail.

Defense attorney Daniel Blank argued that Shelton's death was "a mercy killing" and "assisted suicide," and "an act motivated by love and compassion."

He pointed to Black's scant criminal record -- no history of violence and only one juvenile case of stealing autos along with Shelton.

Virginia Shelton, a former City of Detroit planner, stood beside her son's killer and told Drake that the defendant had been living with her and her son for three months when the killings took place and that she had visited Black several times in jail.

She pleaded for a light sentence, saying she didn't believe that Black killed her son, an 18-year-old with a lengthy rap sheet including a shootout with the FBI. He also had been treated at psychiatric hospitals.

But Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Michael Cox argued the court should send a message that citizens cannot take the law into their own hands. Drake told Black: "You shot your friend in the mouth, and then, seeing him lying there twitching, you shot him in the chest."

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Caption: Photo

Brian Black

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SHELTON III

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