

News

Woman Sentenced to Life as Teen in Killing Wins Clemency

Cyntoia Brown, convicted of killing a man as a teen sex trafficking victim, was granted clemency Monday

By Kimberlee Kruesi
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A woman who says she was a 16-year-old sex trafficking victim when she killed a man in 2004 was granted clemency Monday by Tennessee's governor and soon will be released from prison.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam granted clemency to Cyntoia Brown, who had been serving a life sentence but who will be released on parole on Aug. 7 — exactly 15 years from the date she was first arrested.

"Cyntoia Brown committed, by her own admission, a horrific crime at the age of 16. Yet, imposing a life sentence on a juvenile that would require her to serve at least 51 years before even being eligible for parole consideration is too harsh, especially in light of the extraordinary steps Ms. Brown has taken to rebuild her life," Haslam said in his statement.



This May 23, 2018, file photo shows Cyntoia Brown, entering her clemency hearing at Tennessee Prison for Women in Nashville, Tenn. Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam on Monday, Jan. 7, 2019, granted executive clemency to Brown, serving a life sentence for murder who says she was a victim of sex trafficking. The outgoing Republican governor, whose term ends in just two weeks, chose to show mercy to the now 30-year-old Brown by releasing her Aug. 7.

Brown, 30, will remain on parole supervision for 10 years on the condition she does not violate any state or federal laws, holds a job, and participates in regular counseling sessions.

Brown's case has attracted national attention from criminal justice reform advocates,

and the attention amped up as Haslam's second and final term entered its final weeks. While law enforcement officials had opposed clemency — arguing Brown was not justified in killing Allen — celebrities like Kim Kardashian West and singer Rihanna spoke out for Brown. The governor's

office was inundated with thousands of phone calls and emails from supporters.

"Thank you Governor Haslam," Kardashian West tweeted soon after news of the clemency decision broke, which was followed by similar high-profile responses from former Georgia Democratic gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams, actresses Alyssa Milano and Viola Davis.

Brown was convicted in 2006 of murdering 43-year-old Nashville real estate agent Johnny Allen two years before. Police said she shot Allen in the back of the head at close range with a loaded gun she brought to rob him after he picked her up at a drive-in theater in Nashville to have sex with her.

However, according to her lawyers, Brown was a victim of sex trafficking who not only feared for her life but also lacked the mental state to be cul-

pable in the slaying because she was impaired by her mother's alcohol use while she was in the womb.

Brown expressed thanks in a statement released Monday by her legal team.

"I am thankful for all the support, prayers, and encouragement I have received. We truly serve a God of second chances and new beginnings. The Lord has held my hand this whole time and I would have never made it without him," Brown

said. "Let today be a testament to his saving grace."

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled against life-without-parole sentences for juveniles. However, the state of Tennessee argued successfully in lower courts that it was not in violation of federal law because Brown did have a possibility for parole: She was sentenced to serve at least 51 years of her life sentence.

Read the rest of this story at TheSkanner.com

In Loving Memory – B. Sherell Byrd

Sunrise – February 10, 1969, Sunset – November 13, 2018

Sherell was born February 10, 1969 in Portland, Oregon to Faye Lawson. She attended Irvington and Bin Meade Grade Schools and then Madison and Jefferson High Schools. She graduated from Jefferson High School in 1987 and went to Portland Community College for two years. Sherell was raised in the church where she accepted Jesus Christ at 17 years old. She got her first job at 16 years old at Kaiser Permanente during their Summer Job Program. After high school, she was employed by Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU), Wells Fargo, Meier & Frank Co., and Nordstrom. She was the mother of three children. She married De Shawn Byrd in 1994 and moved to Fort Lewis, Washington. The family later moved to Michigan. Sherell worked for AAA insurance and then worked for the United States Postal Service until her death. She loved to travel, work out, go shopping, pamper herself, listen to music, paint to relax, and eat at fancy restaurants. Sherell went



B. Sherell Byrd

back to school in 2016 to Macomb Community College. She earned an Associate Degree and was only a few classes away from a degree in Social Services. Her future plans were to start a homeless shelter. Sherell was a member of Citadel of Faith Church. She leaves to mourn two sons, Jarell X. Rushing, Dominique J. Byrd, and a daughter, Frejai A. Byrd. She also leaves behind her grandchildren Zaveon, Brooklyn, and Harlem. She also leaves to mourn her mother Faye Lawson, several aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends.

We will miss you: Mom, Ma, Miss Sherell, grandma, Bella, Rell, Bam, Rella Bella, Pudd'n and Bam-Bam. You are gone from us too soon. We know you could not stay. You fought a good fight. You kept the faith. You have finished the race now you are in perfect peace. Thank you God for sharing Sherell with us. The family is grateful for all the prayers, hugs, calls, cards, and gifts.

Repast will be held at 4909 Queen Dr. Sterling Heights MI 48310

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