Defendant: Crystal Mangum

Victim(s): Reginald Daye

Court Decision: Convicted of second-degree murder in the stabbing death of her boyfriend, Reginald Daye, and sentenced to 14 to 18 years in prison​.

Case facts:

Early life

Mangum was born and grew up in Durham, North Carolina, the daughter of Travis Mangum, a truck driver, and his wife Mary. She was the youngest of three children. She attended Hillside High School, graduating in 1996.

In 1996, Mangum filed a police report alleging that three years earlier, when she was 14, she had been kidnapped by three assailants, driven to Creedmoor, North Carolina, and raped. One of those she accused was her boyfriend, who was 21 at the time, which would constitute statutory rape. She subsequently backed away from the charges, a move relatives claimed was motivated by fear for her life. Mangum's father said he did not believe she was raped or injured, though her mother believed such an incident could have occurred—but not in 1993. She thinks it is more likely to have happened when Crystal was 17 or 18 years old, shortly before she made the police report. Mangum's ex-husband, Kenneth Nathanial McNeill, believed the incident occurred as she said it did.

After graduation from high school in 1996, Mangum joined the US Navy. She trained to operate radios and navigation technology. While serving in the Navy, Mangum married McNeill. Her marriage quickly broke down. Mangum reported to police that her husband had threatened to kill her, but the charge was dismissed when she failed to appear in court. She served for less than two years in the Navy before being discharged after becoming pregnant by a fellow sailor, with whom she went on to have another child.

By 2002, Mangum had returned to Durham and was working as an exotic dancer. In 2002, she was arrested on 10 charges after stealing the taxicab of a customer to whom she had given a lap dance. This prompted a police pursuit at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour, occasionally in the wrong lane. After being stopped, Mangum nearly ran over a police officer, succeeding only in hitting his patrol vehicle. She was found to have a blood alcohol content of over twice the legal limit. Ultimately, Mangum pleaded guilty to four counts: assault on a government official, larceny, speeding to elude arrest, and driving while impaired. She served three weekends in jail, paid $4,200 in restitution and fees, and was given two years' probation.

In 2004, Mangum earned an associate degree from Durham Technical Community College, and subsequently enrolled full-time at North Carolina Central University. At the time of the rape allegations, she was in her second year, studying police psychology, and earning a 3.0 average.

Duke lacrosse case

In March 2006, Mangum was hired as a stripper at a party organized by members of the Duke University men's lacrosse team. After arriving in an intoxicated state, having earlier consumed alcohol and cyclobenzaprine, to perform with another stripper at a house rented by three of the team captains, she became involved in an argument with the occupants of the residence and subsequently left.

Mangum then became involved in an altercation with her fellow stripper that necessitated police assistance. The officer who arrived on scene took her to a local drug and mental health center, where she was in the process of being involuntarily committed when, after being asked a leading question, she made a false allegation that she had been raped at the party. District Attorney Mike Nifong, who was up for re-election, pursued the case despite questions about the credibility of Mangum, and conspired with a DNA lab director to withhold exculpatory evidence that would have cleared the lacrosse players of the rape accusations. It took almost a year for the state's attorney general's office to dismiss the charges and declare that the players were innocent of the charges laid against them by Nifong.

In 2008, Mangum published a memoir, The Last Dance for Grace: The Crystal Mangum Story, written with Vincent Clark. The book gives an unsubstantiated version of events, and she continued to insist on the debunked claim that she was assaulted at the party. Mangum claimed that the dropping of the case was politically motivated. The book also outlines her earlier life, reasserting her claim that she was raped at the age of 14.

Attempted murder and murder charge

Just before midnight on February 17, 2010, Durham police were called to Mangum's residence by her nine-year-old daughter. They said that, when they arrived, they found Mangum and her live-in partner, Milton Walker, fighting. She reportedly set fire to some of his clothing in a bathtub in their presence. The building suffered heavy smoke damage. They arrested Mangum on charges of attempted murder, first-degree arson, assault and battery, identity theft, communicating threats, damage to property, resisting an officer, and misdemeanor child abuse.

Mangum was ordered to remain in jail on $1 million bond. Her bond was lowered to $100,000 in May, and she was released from jail to live in a friend's house. She was required to wear an electronic monitoring device. On July 12, 2010, Mangum was released from house arrest and required to move in with her mother. She was allowed to visit her three children but only under supervision of social services. Mangum was arrested again on August 25, 2010, and held on $150,000 bond for failure to comply with the restrictions on her child visitation order.

On December 17, 2010, Mangum was convicted of contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile, injury to personal property and resisting a public officer. The jury deadlocked 9–3 in favor not guilty on the felony arson charge and was unable to reach a decision on it.

After the verdict, Judge Abe Jones sentenced Mangum to 88 days in jail, which she had already served, and left the custody decision in the hands of social services. Durham Assistant District Attorney Mark McCullough announced on January 21, 2011, that he would not retry Mangum on arson charges.

Case Facts

Defendant and Reginald Daye (“Daye”) met through mutual friends in January 2011. One month later, the two began living together along with defendant's three children. On 3 April 2011, defendant and Daye went to a party around 11:00 p.m. and returned to the apartment complex where they lived (“the apartment”) approximately an hour and a half later. Durham Police Department (“DPD”) Officer Curtis Knight (“Knight”) was waiting for an illegally-parked vehicle to be towed from the apartment complex when defendant and Daye approached Knight's patrol car and asked what he was doing. Knight told them. Daye and defendant then entered the apartment, but a few minutes later they were back outside. Knight heard Daye yelling, “give me my money” at defendant, referring to $700 he had given defendant to hold for rent. After Knight told them that they could not be outside making so much noise, defendant and Daye went back inside the apartment.

Daye's nephew, Carlos Wilson (“Wilson”), who lived in the same apartment complex, also heard the commotion and went outside where he encountered Knight. Wilson told Knight he would check on Daye; however, no one answered when Wilson knocked on defendant and Daye's apartment door. Wilson left and went to bed, but was awakened by a knock on his door at approximately 3:00 a.m. When he opened the door, Wilson found Daye standing there, shirtless, and bleeding from his left side. Daye told Wilson that defendant had stabbed him. Wilson then called 911 and attempted to provide medical aide until the paramedics arrived.

At approximately 3:20 a.m., DPD Officer Bradley Frey (“Frey”) arrived at the apartment. Daye told Frey that he and defendant argued about money, the argument became hostile, and defendant stabbed Daye with a knife. As a result of a stab wound to the left side of his chest, approximately two to three inches deep, Daye sustained extensive injuries requiring emergency surgery. Daye died a few days later due to complications from the stab wound.

Several DPD officers investigated and found broken glass, multiple knives—both broken and intact—and bloodstains throughout the apartment. A serrated knife, five inches long with Daye's blood on the blade, was laying flat on the living room couch. Daye's blood was also found on the kitchen counter, the hallway carpet, and the ground and staircase railing outside the apartment. The door from the hallway to the bathroom had been broken off its hinges, and a clump of hair was found on the bathroom floor. Another clump of hair was found in the master bedroom.

DPD Officer C.N. Walker (“Officer Walker”) was also dispatched to the apartment and, upon his arrival, he learned where defendant was located. Shortly thereafter, DPD Officer Charles Franklin and Officer Walker arrested defendant at the nearby home of Liddie Howard (“Howard”), a friend who was watching defendant's children at the time. When Officer Walker arrived at Howard's home, he did not observe any obvious injuries on defendant; but after arriving at police headquarters, defendant claimed “to hurt all over.” Defendant had a scratch below her left eye, which was partially scabbed, and a lesion on the side of her lip.

On 18 April 2011, defendant was indicted for the first degree murder of Daye. From December 2011 to November 2013, defendant filed numerous pre-trial motions which included, inter alia, a motion in limine requesting that the trial court prohibit “the State from mentioning or eliciting from any witness any alleged acts of [defendant's] prior misconduct ․ or any reference to defendant's past criminal conviction[s].” At the pre-trial motion hearing, the State informed the court that it intended to offer evidence pursuant to Rule 404(b) of the North Carolina Rules of Evidence regarding an altercation that occurred between defendant and a man named Milton Walker (“Walker”) in February 2010 (“the Walker incident”). Walker had known defendant since high school, and the two dated periodically before they began living together in a duplex (“the duplex”) in early 2010. Defendant's trial counsel expressed concern about the Rule 404(b) evidence, and stated that, “at a minimum,” the issue should be addressed at the appropriate time during trial. The trial court agreed, and asked that the prosecutor alert both the court and defendant prior to the introduction of any evidence sought to be admitted pursuant to Rule 404(b).

Defendant's trial proceeded in Durham County Superior Court on 12 November 2013 for the first degree murder charge and two charges of larceny of a chose in action. During trial, the State addressed the Rule 404(b) issue regarding the Walker incident to the trial court prior to calling any 404(b) witnesses. The trial court held a voir dire hearing on the evidence, during which the State summarized the facts of the Walker incident and sought to introduce the evidence pursuant to Rule 404(b) for the purposes of showing motive, opportunity, intent, absence of mistake or accident, plan, knowledge, and preparation. Defendant objected, but the trial court ultimately determined that a majority of the Rule 404(b) evidence was admissible and probative of motive, intent, and plan. As a result, multiple witnesses, including Walker, were permitted to testify regarding defendant's involvement in the Walker incident.

The State also presented evidence from DPD Lieutenant Marianne Bond (“Bond”). Prior to his death, Daye spoke with Bond twice regarding the events that transpired between himself and defendant. Bond testified to Daye's statement of the events. After returning from the party, Daye and defendant argued in the apartment's parking lot until a DPD officer approached and told them to calm down. Inside the apartment, defendant called a male—whom Daye believed to be a police officer—to come pick her up and stated that she had a date. Defendant and Daye argued about defendant bringing other men to the apartment. Daye also demanded that defendant return his $700. After more arguing, defendant entered the bathroom and locked the door. Believing defendant had called an unidentified police officer to pick her up, Daye kicked in the bathroom door, grabbed defendant by the hair, and pulled her into the master bedroom. At some point, defendant retrieved multiple knives from the kitchen and “came at him three or four times.” As Daye attempted to protect himself, he received a cut on his hand. Daye was heading to the front door trying to leave the apartment when defendant stabbed him in the hallway.

Daye also told Bond that he grabbed defendant during their argument, but he did not recall punching her that night, and insisted that he had never punched her. However, defendant hit Daye four to five times, including once in the eye. Daye denied ever holding or throwing any knives during the altercation. In response to Bond's question regarding multiple hair samples found in the apartment during the investigation, Daye admitted that he was probably the one that pulled out defendant's hair.

Defendant testified in her own defense, and gave a much different account. According to defendant, Daye had never before complained about defendant bringing other men to the apartment. However, on the night in question, Daye felt disrespected because defendant was talking to other men. During their argument, Daye suddenly hit defendant, causing her to fall down on the living room floor. The fighting spilled over to the master bedroom. At some point, Daye went to the kitchen, retrieved several knives, and began throwing them at defendant as she hid behind a mattress. After defendant locked herself in the bathroom, Daye kicked in the door and dragged her by the hair back to the master bedroom, where Daye pinned defendant against the floor, hitting and choking her. In response, defendant grabbed a knife off the floor, “poked” Daye in his side, exited the apartment, and ran to Howard's home.

On 22 November 2013, the jury returned a verdict finding defendant guilty of second degree murder and not guilty on the larceny charges. The trial court entered judgment and sentenced defendant to a minimum term of 170 months and a maximum term of 216 months to be served in the custody of the North Carolina Division of Adult Correction. Defendant appeals.