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Man Sentenced to 30 Years for St. Croix Shooting That Killed Daughter, Injured Mother During Apartment Search

Jiovani Smith was sentenced to 30 years in prison for the 2020 shooting that claimed the life of 19-year-old Selena Chitolie. The court heard emotional testimony as the V.I. justice system seeks to combat the territory's ongoing gun violence crisis

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Mugshot of Jiovani Smith. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — Jiovani Smith, 24, has been sentenced to 30 years in prison for the second-degree homicide of Selena Chitolie, a crime that occurred in 2020.

According to the V.I. Dept. of Justice, V.I. Superior Court Judge Alfonso Andrews Jr. handed down the sentence following Smith's guilty plea earlier this year. The case involved the shooting of a 19-year-old woman who was shot while in the vehicle with her mother looking for apartments. While the victim survived the immediate aftermath, [she died two weeks later](#).

The events of May 15, 2020, unfolded as Chitolie and her family were driving through the Mount Pleasant area of Frederiksted, St. Croix. According to court documents, the family was searching for a rental home when they were pursued and fired upon by Smith and two other men. The attack left Chitolie with a fatal gunshot wound to the back of her neck, while her mother, Nissa Camacho, who was also in the vehicle, was shot and continues to carry a bullet fragment in her neck.

Chitolie was airlifted for emergency medical treatment but tragically succumbed to her injuries. Ms. Camacho, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, also sustained a gunshot wound to the neck but survived. According to a police affidavit, Ms. Camacho recalled hearing multiple gunshots and seeing dust rise around their vehicle near the abandoned Evelyn M. Williams Elementary School before realizing her daughter had been hit. Ms. Camacho also identified a slender man, armed with a long gun, who emerged from the passenger side of a silver Ford Focus and fired at their vehicle.

Smith, along with one of the other accused men, Calijah Brewley, pleaded guilty to the crime earlier this year. Brewley is awaiting sentencing, while the third man involved, Jerome Wallace, is still awaiting trial.

During the sentencing hearing, the court heard statements from Smith, his attorney Semaj Johnson, and members of Chitolie's family. Amie Simpson, Criminal Chief for the Virgin Islands Department of Justice (DOJ), emphasized that Smith was out on release for a firearms charge at the time of the murder. Simpson underscored the senseless nature of the crime and the need for the judicial system to send a strong message against gun violence in the territory.

In his ruling, Judge Andrews echoed those sentiments, noting the ongoing gun violence crisis in the Virgin Islands and the need for accountability. He emphasized that the community cannot tolerate such violent acts and that the justice system must take a firm stance against such crimes.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant Attorneys General Robert Pickett and Travis Crowell, with Criminal Chief Amie Simpson leading the team from the DOJ. Gordon C. Rhea, Attorney General nominee for the U.S. Virgin Islands, praised the work of Simpson, Pickett, Crowell, and Detective Aisha Jules of the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) for their efforts in securing justice for the victim and her family.