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Man Sentenced to 30 Years in Prison for 2021 Murder of Nancy Nieves

Man who fled territory after brutal crime captured in California, sentenced to decades in prison for 2021 murder of St. Croix woman identified through DNA evidence

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Tyler Delroy Smith was arrested in California on April 4, 2022 and as of April 5, 2022 was awaiting an extradition hearing to the U.S. Virgin Islands. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — The V.I. Department of Justice announced on Tuesday that 35-year-old Tyley Smith has been sentenced to 30 years in prison for the murder of 58-year-old Nancy Nieves, an incident that occurred in June 2021.

The sentencing was delivered by V.I. Superior Court Judge Alphonso G. Andrews, Jr. on Monday following Smith's plea to second-degree murder. Smith had entered the plea on July 22, 2024, just as the case was about to go to trial. His defense counsel had advocated for a reduced sentence of ten years, but the court imposed a harsher punishment based on the severity of the crime.

The murder took place on June 2, 2021, when Nieves' [body was discovered](#) by the side of the road in Estate St. John, St. Croix. The injuries inflicted upon her were so severe that authorities were initially unable to identify her through conventional means. A DNA analysis was conducted, which eventually confirmed her identity. The V.I. Police Department launched an investigation, but Smith fled the territory shortly after authorities searched his residence.

A breakthrough in the case came when law enforcement issued a warrant for Smith's arrest in February 2022. The fugitive was eventually tracked down in Ankeny, Iowa, before being [captured in California in April](#) of that year. Among the critical pieces of evidence presented against Smith were video footage showing him following Nieves on the road and DNA evidence that linked him directly to the crime scene, with traces of his DNA found under Nieves' fingernails.

Attorney General Designee Gordon C. Rhea expressed his satisfaction with the outcome of the case and extended his gratitude to the dedicated law enforcement officials who contributed to Smith's apprehension and prosecution. He gave special recognition to Amie Simpson, the Criminal Chief of the V.I. Department of Justice for the St. Croix District, and the diligent efforts of the VIPD's Special Operations Unit and Criminal Investigations Bureau detectives.