

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas Man Sentenced For Killing Another Man With A Rock Over Cigarette Lighter

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A 52-year-old father of four learned of his fate on Wednesday for fatally wounding another man with a rock, over a cigarette lighter, the Virgin Islands Department of Justice announced.

Having pleaded guilty to smashing in Ellmeade Daniel's head with a rock and killing him, Mario E. Brown appeared before V.I. Superior Court Judge Michael Dunston Wednesday morning for his sentencing.

Mr. Brown, who was charged with first-degree murder, first-degree assault, second-degree murder, thirddegree assault, using a dangerous weapon during the commission

of a crime of violence and voluntary manslaughter in connection with the September 2015 incident, accepted a plea deal offered by Attorney General Claude Walker and pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and possession of a dangerous weapon during the commission of a crime of violence.

In his allocution to the court reciting the terms of the plea bargain, Assistant Attorney General Eugene James Connor, Jr. recommended that Mr. Brown be sentenced to 15 years' incarceration.

"This case involved the death of the victim," Mr. Connor said. Public defender, Kwami Motilewa, asked the court to have leniency and mercy on his client as he has suffered and continues to suffer from several defects, including emotional stability and schizophrenic trends. Mr. Motilewa then suggested to the court that in light of those and other factors, Mr. Brown's sentences for the two convictions should run concurrently, "such as in the aggregate, he will spend 10 years and be given credit for time served."

One of Brown's son, Jameel Brown, apologized in open court on behalf of his father to the victim's family and asked the court to send his father to a rehabilitation center "so he can become a better person in society."

Having heard the pleas for leniency and pleas of mitigation, Judge Dunston handed down his punishment and sentenced Brown to seven and a half years imprisonment for the weapons conviction and 10 years behind bars for voluntary manslaughter with credit for the 337 days he has already served at the Bureau of Corrections. Both sentences are to run concurrently. Judge Dunston dismissed the remaining four counts with prejudice and also ordered Mr. Brown to pay restitution in the amount of \$4,445.97.

"I am going to recommend to BOC that you be enrolled in mental health counseling or treatment program," Judge Dunston added.

Mr. Brown was arrested on Sept. 22, 2015 after an eyewitness identified him as the person who struck Mr. Daniel, 59, on the head with a rock. When officers responded to the incident at Sanchez Town, Est. Nadir, they found Daniel lying on the ground and bleeding from his head. He was unresponsive, Det. Nigel James stated in his probable cause fact sheet.

According to the eyewitness' account, Mr. Daniel and another man were sitting under a shed at a bar when Mr. Brown approached Mr. Daniel and asked him for a lighter. Mr. Daniel told Mr. Brown that he did not have a lighter. Mr. Brown ran to the back of the bar and returned with a rock, which he used to strike Mr. Daniel on the head, Mr. James wrote. The witness shook Mr. Daniel, but he did not respond.

The witness then went to a friend's house 20 minutes away and the friend called 911. Emergency Medical Technicians who arrived on the scene pronounced Mr. Daniel dead. The eyewitness viewed a police photo array and positively identified Mr. Brown as the individual who struck Mr. Daniel with a rock, according to Mr. James' probable cause fact sheet.

Correction: August 25, 2016

A previous version of this story stated that Mr. Brown's sentence was handed down today, when it actually happened on Wednesday. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.

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