

The Virgin Islands Consortium

54 Years Of Combined Imprisonment Handed To Three VI Criminals

Crime / **Published On July 26, 2017 11:40 PM /**

Staff **July 26, 2017**



ST. THOMAS -- Three violent criminals – C'Quan Celestine, above, Shaheid Maynard and Winston Carter – will not see the light of day for several years, V.I. Department of Justice Public Media Officer Corliss Smithen announced Wednesday.

V.I. Superior Court Judge Michael Dunston sentenced the three men today for various gun crimes in three unrelated incidents.

Attorney General Claude Earl Walker issued a brief statement following the sentencing hearings.

"Today, through successful prosecution, we have removed three dangerous criminals, including a repeat offender, off of the streets of the Virgin Islands," AG Walker said. "This is good news to all law-abiding residents in every part of the Territory who are united in their desire for a safe and peaceful Virgin Islands. Guns were used in each case, and so, our message is clear: when you use a gun as part of a crime in the Virgin Islands, you will be quickly prosecuted to the full extent of the law. We know that gun violence remains a serious public safety issue, but with our policy of precision prosecution of violent gun cases, we will continue to swiftly bring such cases to conclusion. We have additional experienced prosecutors coming in August to join our expanded Violent Crime Unit because we want to ensure that violent offenders are removed from Virgin Islands society by being convicted and put in prison."

Celestine, 23, of Anna's Retreat was sentenced for second-degree attempted murder, unauthorized use of a firearm during the commission of a second-degree attempted murder, first-degree assault, unauthorized use of a firearm during the commission of a first-degree assault, third-degree assault, unauthorized use of a firearm during the commission of a third-degree assault and unauthorized possession of a firearm, two months after a jury unanimously convicted him of shooting a female victim in the face and leaving her for dead. The incident occurred on August 9, 2015.

"Mr. Celestine, you have turned my life upside down," the victim said as she addressed the court at Celestine's sentencing. "You shot me in my face about an inch under my right eye and it exited through my neck. I did nothing to provoke you."

Judge Dunston, who sentenced Celestine as a habitual offender, handed down a 40-year prison term with credit for the 418 days he has already served since his arrest. Celestine was also ordered to pay restitution to the victim in the amount of \$2,876 and \$75 court cost. He was immediately taken back to the Bureau of Corrections.

"In this instance, I feel that his actions demonstrated callousness and disregard for [the victim], another human being. That is frightening," Judge Dunston said.

Maynard, 21, of Estate Thomas was punished for the May 22, 2016, shooting death of Vershawn Monsanto in the area of the Oswald Harris Court housing community. Facing one count each of voluntary manslaughter, third-degree assault, first-degree reckless endangerment, unauthorized possession of a firearm during the commission of a third-degree assault and unauthorized possession of a firearm during the commission of a voluntary manslaughter, Maynard pleaded guilty to the single charge of voluntary manslaughter.

"I just want to say I apologize to the victim's family and to my family," Maynard said at his sentencing, when given the opportunity to address the court on his own behalf. "On that day, I had no intention of killing anyone; I was just trying to protect myself. I take full responsibility for carrying a gun and killing somebody."

Judge Dunston handed him a seven-year prison sentence with credit for the 414 days he has already served since he was arrested. Maynard was remanded into custody and escorted back to the BOC to serve the remainder of his sentence.

According to the probable cause fact sheet of Det. Nigel James, Maynard admitted to police that he shot Monsanto. Three witnesses had already identified him as the shooter. During a police interview, Maynard told officers that he went to the McDonald's restaurant to get something to eat and while there, he got into an argument with some individuals inside the restaurant and he left with his food.

When he got in the area of the Oswald Harris Court housing community, Vershawn Monsanto approached him, pulled out a gun and began shooting at him. Maynard then shot at Monsanto and ran from the area. Monsanto was transported to Schneider Hospital, where he later died, according to James.

Carter, 26, of Upper John Dunkoe, St. John, has been given until Friday to report to the BOC, his new home for the next seven years.

Carter, who faced one count each of first-degree assault, third-degree assault, possession of an unlicensed firearm, unauthorized possession of a dangerous weapon during the commission of a first-degree assault, unauthorized possession of a dangerous weapon during the commission of a third-degree assault and reckless endangerment, entered an Alford plea and pleaded guilty to first-degree assault. The charges and subsequent plea of guilt stemmed from the April 19, 2016, shooting of Shashi Seetaram.

According to a probable cause fact sheet filed by Det. Dwight Griffith, police responded to a report of shots fired in the area of the Apostolic Faith Church in Altona. On arrival at the scene, officers found Seetaram lying face-up in the church's parking lot. He was bleeding profusely from multiple gunshot wounds about his head and body.

When asked who shot him, Seetaram told officers that he did not know the name of his shooter, but that the shooter's number was the last one that appeared in the listing on his cellular phone. Police searched the phone, obtained the number and found that it belonged to Carter, who was arrested two days later.

"I'm sorry. I apologize to my family; I apologize to everybody," Carter told the court at his sentencing.

Judge Dunston sentenced Carter to seven years' imprisonment with credit for the 105 days he served at the BOC after his arrest and also ordered him to pay \$75 court cost.

Assistant Attorney General Eugene James Connor, Jr. argued the cases for the prosecution.