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THREE CHARGED IN 2019 STABBING DEATH OF 17-YEAR-OLD IN SOUTH JAMAICA

Victim Talasia Cuffie Attended Memorial for Slain Teenager and was Lured Away, Stabbed Twice and Left to Die in Street; Defendants Face up to 25 Years to Life in Prison if Convicted

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Tianna Benjamin, Charles Gillespie and Kyra Tyrell have been indicted by a grand jury and charged with murder, weapon possession and conspiracy in the November 2019 stabbing death of 17-year-old Talasia Cuffie. The victim attended a memorial basketball game being held in honor of Aamir Griffin, a 14-year-old who was killed at a Queens playground, and was lured to a location in South Jamaica where she was stabbed and left bleeding in the street for more than 20 minutes before being found. The homicide apparently stemmed from the mistaken belief that the victim was pregnant with Gillespie's child. The murders of both teens are not related.

District Attorney Katz said: "Approximately an hour after the memorial, the victim was persuaded by the defendants to go to a quiet residential block where they mercilessly stabbed her in the abdomen and groin. The gravely injured 17-year-old was abandoned on the sidewalk before she was found and taken to a nearby hospital where she passed away. At the Queens District Attorney's Office, we never give up on our cases and with today's arraignment we are one step closer in delivering justice for Talasia and her loved ones."

Benjamin, 29, of 110th Road in Jamaica; Gillespie, 24, of 109th Road in Jamaica, and Tyrell, 22, of Clarkson Avenue in Brooklyn, were each charged in a grand jury indictment with two counts of murder in the second degree; criminal possession of weapon in the fourth degree; and conspiracy in the second degree.

Benjamin and Tyrell were arraigned yesterday before Supreme Court Justice Kenneth Holder, who ordered them to return to court on April 22.

Gillespie, who is incarcerated on another case, will be arraigned at a later date.

If convicted, they each face up to 25 years to life in prison.

DA Katz said that, according to the charges and investigation, on November 15, 2019, at approximately 7:17 p.m., Tyrell messaged Benjamin through Facebook Messenger and told her to be dressed in all black.

Between approximately 7:12 p.m. to 9:17 p.m. that night, the defendants allegedly communicated through Facebook and phone texts to "get" Talasia Cuffie to a location on 166th Street.

At approximately 9:07 p.m. Tyrell and Benjamin were on 166th Street in South Jamaica and were monitoring the area. During this time, they contacted Gillespie. A few minutes later, at approximately 9:20 p.m., Tyrell and Benjamin, acting in concert, allegedly stabbed Cuffie twice, once in the abdomen and once in the groin.

Gillespie is alleged to have then transported Tyrell and Benjamin in a car and taken them to Benjamin's residence in South Jamaica.

Gillespie was dating Tyrell at the time of the stabbing and was also in a relationship with Cuffie. The victim claimed she had become pregnant, which angered Tyrell and Gillespie. Gillespie urged her to have an abortion. Autopsy results showed that Cuffie had never been pregnant.

In April 2024, Sean Brown was sentenced to 30 years in prison for the shooting death of Aamir Griffin.

Assistant District Attorney Michelle Goldstein, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau, is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Senior Assistant District Attorney Genevieve Gadaleta under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Sennett, Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave.

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Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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