

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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James Damon Clements sentenced to life in prison without parole for murder of ex-girlfriend
State vs. James Damon Clements

March 4, 2022 – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that on March 1, James Damon Clements, 53, was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole after a Cherokee County jury found him guilty of charges stemming from an attack on two male roommates and the brutal murder of ex-girlfriend, Shannon Marie Goetz, 48, in a Woodstock home.

The Cherokee Sheriff's Office responded to an emergency call for a "person down" just after 7 p.m. on December 22, 2017, in the Eagle Watch subdivision. When deputies entered the basement bedroom, they observed signs of a struggle and found Goetz deceased on the floor with visible injuries to her body. Goetz had been in a relationship with Clements, which she had broken off shortly before her death. She had planned to move back to Florida on the day she was murdered.

During the course of the investigation, detectives determined that earlier on the same day, Clements brandished a knife and assaulted two other residents of the home in what was described as a jealous rage involving accusations that the men had a romantic interest in Goetz. Witnesses said that during the assault Goetz stood in the doorway nearby, scared and silent. After the attack, Clements returned to the basement with Goetz. That was the last time Goetz was seen alive.

Clements then used Goetz' cell phone to call 911, holding himself out to be the homeowner of the residence. After making the phone call, he fled the scene and rented a Cobb County hotel room under another person's name. Law enforcement officials were able to track Clements' location to Marietta, where he was arrested two days later.

The autopsy determined that Goetz had more than 34 injuries to her head, torso, and extremities, with the ultimate cause of death being a brain injury. Expert testimony presented by the State at trial showed that Goetz likely received a significant blow to the head that caused her to fall forward onto the concrete basement floor.

"The evidence in this case proved beyond a reasonable doubt that this defendant was solely responsible for the death of Shannon Goetz, and that it was his brutal beating that took her life," said Chief Assistant District Attorney Susan Treadaway, who prosecuted this case with Deputy Chief ADA Rachel Ashe of the Domestic Violence Unit. "Text communications between the defendant and Shannon Goetz, along with eyewitness accounts, proved that this was not the first time the defendant was violent with her, and that she had been the victim of his cruel accusations, control, and manipulation for the duration of their relationship. Everyone in that house was afraid of this man, and Shannon Goetz died as a result of his rage."

During the weeklong trial that ended on February 11, the State called 27 witnesses to the stand and introduced more than 150 exhibits. After hearing closing arguments, the jury deliberated for less than two hours before reaching its verdict, which resulted in convictions for felony murder, family violence aggravated battery, aggravated assault, simple assault, and battery.

At the March 1 sentencing hearing, the State read an impact statement provided by the victim’s family that read, in part: “We can never get [Shannon Goetz] back, and our hearts ache from the loss, knowing we will never get to see her beautiful smile or laugh again. Today and for the rest of our days, we will be mourning our loss not only of Shannon, who was a daughter, a sister, a mother, and a grandmother, but the loss of the ability to make new memories with her.... This sentencing will not bring Shannon back or bring back our ability to hear her voice again, but it will give us back some hope that the cruel and horrible things that were done to her by this man will not ever be able to be done to any other wonderful woman again.”

Chief Judge Ellen McElyea followed the State’s recommendation and sentenced Clements to the maximum of life in prison without the possibility of parole for Goetz’ murder. Clements also received concurrent sentences of 20 years to serve for the aggravated assault he committed on one roommate, and 12 months to serve for the simple assault committed against the second roommate.

“Nearly all domestic violence lethality factors were present in this case – including increasingly violent attacks, jealous behavior, victim in the process of leaving, prior criminal history, and substance abuse – ultimately leading to murder,” said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. “Four years ago, this man forever silenced the voice of another domestic violence victim. But Ms. Goetz will always be remembered and honored. And with this verdict, victims of domestic violence will know that their voices will be heard in Cherokee County.”

The case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff’s Office, and prosecuted by Chief Assistant District Attorney Susan Treadaway and Deputy Chief ADA Rachel Ashe of the Domestic Violence Unit, Cherokee County District Attorney’s Office.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence typically follows a pattern, with tension building, followed by a major act of violence, a calm period, and then cycling back to tension building. As time passes, the violent episodes often get more serious and may lead to a lethal act.

If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic violence, please contact the Cherokee Family Violence Center, CFVC.org, 770-479-1703 (24/7 crisis hotline). In case of an emergency, call 911.

The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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