



The System Works: Former Dallas Cop Guilty of Murder Sentenced to 10 Years

After a trial that lasted one week, former Dallas police officer Amber Guyger (shown) was found guilty Tuesday of the murder of an unarmed black man in his own apartment after mistakenly entering the apartment, thinking it was hers. The jury took only five hours to deliberate before reaching that verdict.



In a case that shook the nation, Guyger — after completing a 15-hour tour of duty — entered the apartment directly above her own and found the resident of that apartment, Botham Jean, sitting on the couch, watching television and eating ice cream. She proceeded to shoot him once — in the torso — ending his life. She actually fired twice, but only one shot hit its mark — center mass, a shot police are trained to take — her other shot missed Jean entirely.

The jury heard her claim that she feared for her life and ordered him to “show me your hands” before firing as he advanced toward her. This claim was contradicted by both witness testimony and forensic evidence. Two roommates of Jean who were in the apartment at the time said they heard shouting, but never heard Guyger command Jean to stop or show his hands. In fact, one testified that she heard pounding on the door and a female shouting for the door to be opened and “Let me in.” She then heard more shouting and then two gun shots. This is directly opposed to Guyger’s statements and testimony.

A forensic pathologist testified that the trajectory of the bullet showed a downward angle, indicating either that Jean was seated — or perhaps just rising from a seated position — or was crouching (possibly in fear) when he was shot. That trajectory would have been impossible if Jean was standing and walking toward Guyger when she shot him.

Furthermore, though Guyger may not have known Jean, she certainly knew of him. She had filed several noise complaints with the management of the apartment building for sounds coming from the apartment directly above hers, which was where Jean and his roommates lived. In fact, one of those noise complaints had been filed just that morning, before she inexplicably wound up in his apartment standing over his body that evening.

Since Guyger claimed to not notice that she was in the wrong apartment — though Jean had a conspicuous red doormat outside his apartment and she did not — there were questions as to whether she was under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the shooting. A toxicology report showed that was not the case. She claimed that she was fatigued after a long shift and simply did not notice that she was in the wrong apartment. However, the prosecution presented evidence in the form of sexually



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explicit texts back and forth between her and her police partner to show that she was sufficiently cognitive to communicate in graphic detail just before the shooting.

The jury also heard evidence including text messages and social-media posts from Guyger that some say indicate she is racist. One communication was from a time when she was providing police security at an event honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. She was asked when it would be over. She replied, “When MLK is dead ... oh wait ...”

Other evidence presented at trial showed that Guyger was possibly trigger happy. One social-media post that she had saved to a page for “Quotes and Inspiration” simply stated, “Kill first, die last.”

Guyger — though not required to do so — testified in her own defense at the trial, telling the court that she “feared for her life” when she saw a silhouetted figure in the darkened living room advancing toward her.

The jury had the option of choosing between murder or the lesser charge of manslaughter. The key difference between those two charges is intent. When asked, “When you aimed and pulled the trigger at Mr. Jean, shooting him in center mass — exactly where you are trained — you intended to kill Mr. Jean?” Guyger — who had had her eyes closed during the question — opened them and calmly answered, “I did.”

In the end, the jury found her guilty of murder, and the sentencing phase of the trial commenced on Wednesday. Guyger faced anywhere between five and 99 years in prison. Some members of Jean’s family and others present celebrated the guilty verdict and hoped for the maximum sentence.

The courtroom was emotionally charged Wednesday as family and friends testified and made statements. One of Jean’s brothers told Guyger that he hoped she rots in prison. His younger brother, Brandt — a teenager — did not share those sentiments, telling Guyger:

I hope you go to God with all the guilt, all the bad things you may have done in the past, each and every one of us may have done something that we were not supposed to do. If you truly are sorry, I know — I can speak for myself — I forgive you. And I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you. And I don’t think anyone could say — again, I’m speaking for myself, I’m not even here for my family. But I love you just like anyone else. And I’m not going to say I hope you rot and die just like my brother did. But I personally want the best for you. And I wasn’t gonna ever say this in front of my family or anyone but I don’t even want you to go to jail. I want the best for you. Because I know that’s what — that’s exactly what Botham would want you to do. And the best would be give your life to Christ. I’m not going to say anything else. I think giving your life to Christ would be the best thing that Botham would want you to do.

Brandt then did the unthinkable in this racially charged time. After asking the judge for permission, he approached Guyger and hugged her closely for a full minute, putting action to his words of forgiveness. After sentencing Guyger to 10 years in prison, the judge, Tammy Kemp — who is also black — also hugged Guyger and presented her with a Bible.

This moment of forgiveness, which U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) described as “Christian love” and former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley called an “amazing example of faith, love, and forgiveness,” would go a long way to healing the racial strife that currently divides too much of America if it were to catch on and spread.

Not everyone saw it that way, though. Jemar Tisby, an African American historian and writer, told the



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Washington Post, “Black people, when they experience injustice, there’s almost an expectation that we will immediately forgive and therefore can sort of move on,” adding, “So I think a lot of people are reacting — that we have a right to be angry, a right to grieve, and a right to want justice.”

But that bitterness and anger misses the point: Justice was served. The system so decried by Black Lives Matter activists and other race baiters as a racist system that persecutes black people just served the very justice they claim to seek. In other words, the system worked. And justice is not opposed to love and forgiveness.



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