

ALERT

TOP STORY

Cousins to serve 18 years for robbery, beating in Spotsylvania

Keith Epps

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Two cousins who arranged and carried out a brutal robbery in Spotsylvania County last year were both ordered Tuesday to serve 18 years in prison.

Destinee S. Newman, 29, of Spotsylvania, and Elijah Cofield, 27, of Camp Springs, Maryland, were sentenced in Spotsylvania Circuit Court, where they were convicted earlier this year of nine charges including aggravated malicious wounding, robbery with serious bodily injury and abduction. Judge Ricardo Rigual's sentence included several dozen years of suspended time.

Newman and the victim, 33-year-old Brandon Smith, had been dating and were living together when they returned from Florida to their home on Abberly Village Lane in Spotsylvania early May 5. The evidence presented by prosecutors Kelly Green and Ryan Mehaffey showed that Newman opened their apartment door using an app on her phone to allow Cofield and at least one other man inside. The other man was never identified.

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When Smith entered his home, he was attacked by two masked men, one wielding an iron pipe and the other a gun. Smith ended up in a hospital with severe face and head trauma, arm and hand fractures and broken teeth.

Smith claimed that \$300,000 in cash he was carrying was taken, along with another \$140,000 that was stashed in the apartment. The money was never recovered.

Smith, who was in jail on drug- and gun-related charges in Henrico County during the trial, testified that he earned the money from an entertainment business he was operating.

Prosecutors acknowledged that Smith, an admitted former gang member, was no saint. But they said that did not justify the beating he took.

Phone records and a fingerprint left at the scene by Cofield led to their arrests. Smith assisted in the investigation by driving to the Maryland area after using the Find My Phone app to track down his phone, which had been taken in the robbery.

Both Newman and Cofield insisted Tuesday they were not involved in the incident. But Rigual said the evidence against them was “overwhelming.”

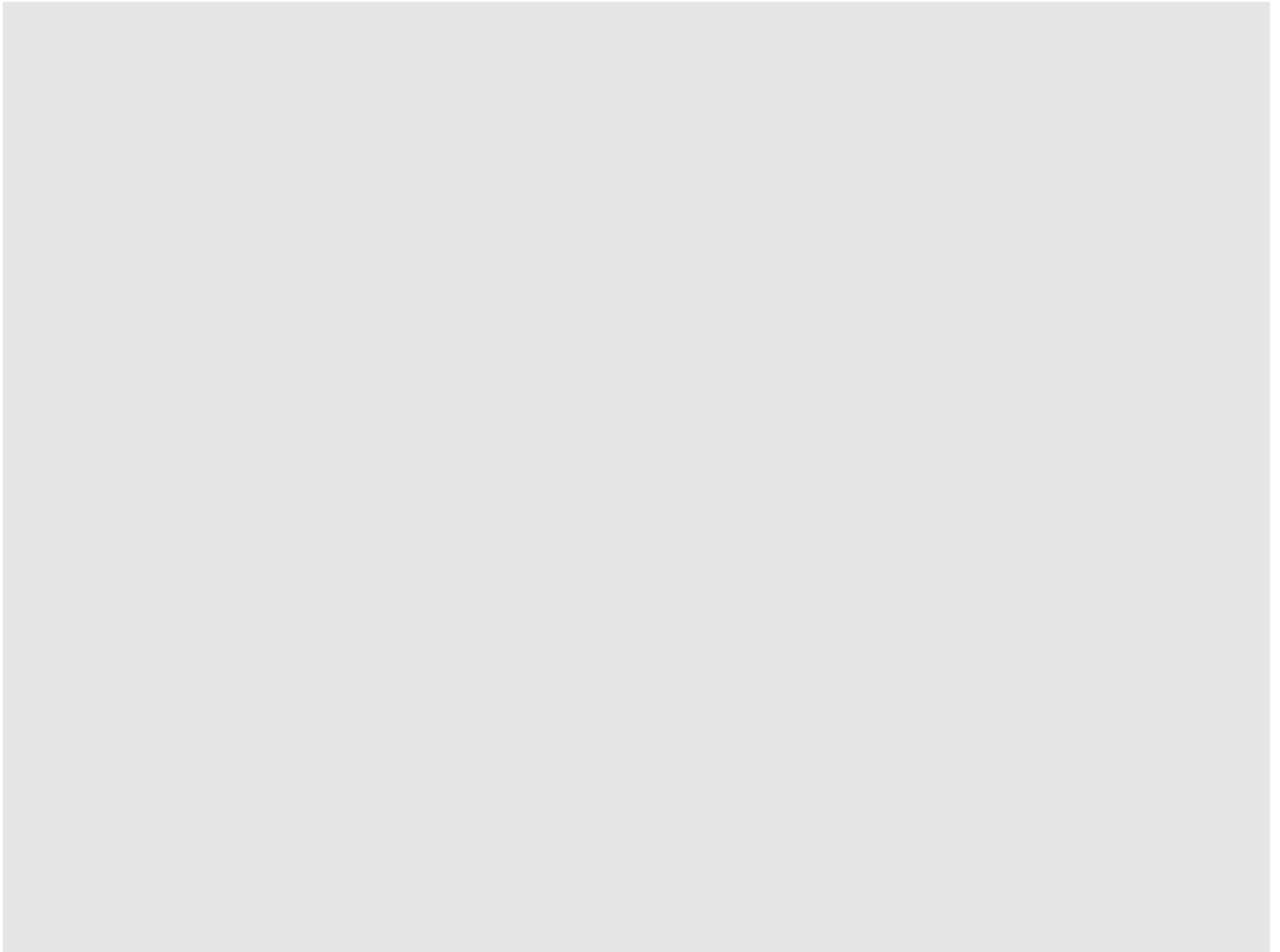
Newman’s attorney, Spencer Reiss, argued that the mandatory minimum sentence of 13 years was punishment enough for his client, who he said had never been arrested before. Alexander Raymond, Cofield’s attorney, made a similar argument and told Rigual that the jury simply got it wrong.

Green said both defendants deserved harsh sentences. He said Newman clearly planned to have Smith killed and said she “literally and figuratively opened the door to this robbery and vicious beating.”

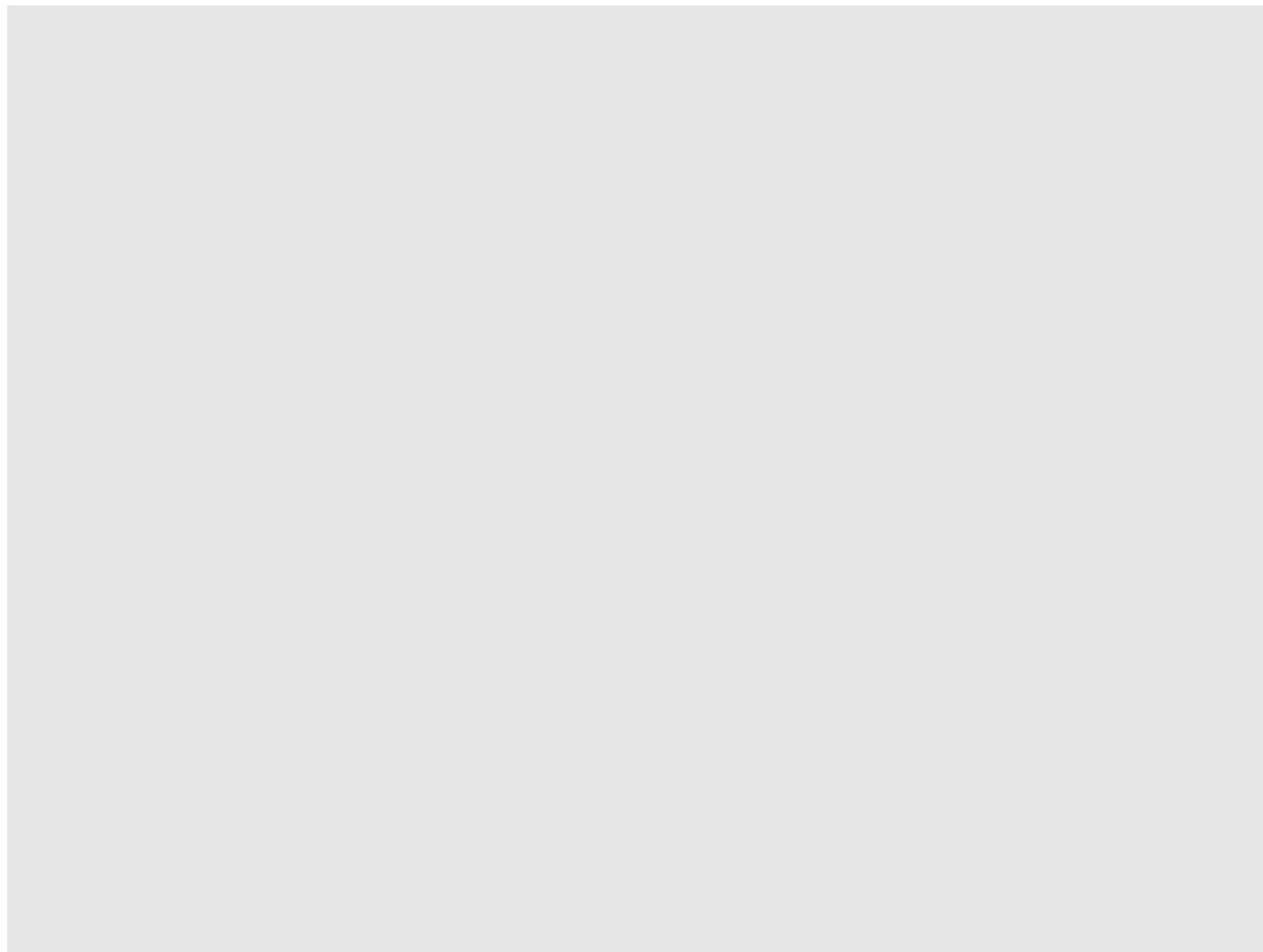
In a statement just before he was sentenced, Cofield said he understands that the evidence looked bad for him.

“Although I didn’t do this, it’s not true that I have no remorse,” Cofield said. “I wouldn’t wish that on anybody.”

Both defendants said they plan to appeal their convictions.



Newman



Cofield

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