

## Slaying sentence upheld in emotional city hearing

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BY KEITH EPPS

It's been more than 18 months since Kendall Richardson's 3-year-old daughter saw her father.

But that hasn't stopped the child from expecting her deceased father, Dasan Richardson, to show up.

"She keeps saying that 'I need to get ready. My daddy is coming to pick me up,'" a sobbing Kendall Richardson testified yesterday in Fredericksburg Circuit Court.

The man responsible for Richardson's death, Brandon Lee Smith, was sentenced yesterday to 38 years in prison by Judge Gordon Willis.

It was the same sentence a jury recommended in April after convicting 20-year-old Smith of first-degree murder and using a firearm in the commission of a felony.

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Richardson, a 30-year-old father of three, was killed outside Mi Casa Restaurant in Central Park on Jan. 12, 2008.

According to the evidence, Richardson was one of several people providing security at a hip-hop event that night.

Smith and some of his friends were initially denied entrance to the event, in part because employees claimed they had caused trouble at previous gatherings.

Smith later sneaked into the club but was soon forcibly removed by security workers Sonny Odum and Kynn Garrison.

Witnesses testified that one of the workers put Smith in a "sleeper hold" that left him briefly unconscious on the sidewalk.

When he came to, Smith vowed to return and did so a few minutes later. A major brawl erupted near the front door after Smith punched Odum in the face.

During the ensuing ruckus, Smith fired two shots from a .45-caliber gun. One of the shots struck Richardson, who had not been directly involved in the altercation with Smith, in the chest.

Defense attorney Stuart Sullivan tried again yesterday to have the first-degree murder verdict overturned because there was no premeditation.

He argued there was no evidence that Smith intended to kill Richardson or that the two men ever had a problem.

Smith said at trial and again yesterday that he fired the gun while being hit and stomped by more than one person.

He said he didn't mean to shoot Richardson--or anyone else. He said that if he had meant to kill anyone, it would have been Odum.

But prosecutor Travis Bird said Smith plotted his revenge right after being laid out with the choke hold.

"He was upset and embarrassed about being punked out in front of his friends," Bird said.

Regardless of Smith's intentions, the effects of his actions were clear yesterday. Both Richardson's wife and his sister, Shamika Poole, sobbed heavily as they described the devastating impact his death has had on the family.

"He was my everything," Kendall Richardson said. "There's a void that I can't describe."

Smith said he is sorry for the pain he caused the Richardson family and repeatedly reiterated that he didn't mean to shoot him.

Sullivan unsuccessfully tried to persuade Willis to suspend some of the 38 years the jury recommended.

But he acknowledged that a lengthy prison term was inevitable.

"He's had a lot to overcome in his life," Sullivan said. "But the fact that he's about to be sentenced for murder shows he didn't overcome it."

Prosecutor Bird pointed out that Smith now has 18 criminal convictions and "needs to pay for the choices he has made."

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