



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **District Man Sentenced to 105 Years in Prison For Deadly Shooting Rampage -Killed One Victim, Wounded Three More-**

WASHINGTON - Seneca Benjamin, 33, was sentenced today to 105 years in prison on charges stemming from a deadly shooting rampage in which one person was killed and three others were shot in the head or chest, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

Benjamin, of Washington, D.C., pled guilty in November 2010 to a charge of second degree murder while armed. The plea came while a jury was deliberating his case in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. The jury already had convicted him of 16 other counts in connection with the shootings, including assault with intent to kill while armed, aggravated assault while armed and mayhem while armed. At the time of the plea, the jury was still considering the murder charge; the panel was having difficulty deciding between first degree murder while armed and second degree murder while armed and reported three times that it was deadlocked.

During the trial, the defendant admitted shooting and killing his uncle's fiancé, and shooting his uncle, his cousin and a family friend. He was sentenced by the Honorable Judge Michael L. Rankin.

According to the government's evidence, on April 26, 2009, Seneca Benjamin shot and killed Monique Nalle, 42. He also shot and wounded Nalle's fiancé, Andre L. Benjamin; Andre Benjamin's son, Andre A. Benjamin, and Whitfield Arnett. The defendant is Andre L. Benjamin's nephew and Andre A. Benjamin's cousin. The shootings occurred in the unit block of Bryant Street NW, where Andre L. Benjamin lived with Nalle.

The carnage began at approximately 2:30 p.m. Seneca Benjamin periodically spent time at the Bryant Street residence and went there that day. After entering the home, he went to the second floor bedroom in which Nalle and Andre L. Benjamin lived. He asked about the location of his Mac-11, a machine gun. Nalle did not know where it was.

Moments later, Nalle stated that neighbors had said that the defendant had slashed the tires on Nalle's son's car. Seneca Benjamin denied doing so. He turned around as if to leave the bedroom. But instead of heading out, he turned, pulled out a handgun and started shooting at Nalle, who was about ten feet away, unarmed and defenseless. She was shot in the head and chest. Andre L. Benjamin had been watching television as Seneca Benjamin came into the room. When he realized what was happening to his fiancé, he dove at his nephew in an attempt to protect her. The defendant turned his gun on Andre L. Benjamin and shot him in the face.

Seneca Benjamin then headed downstairs, where he encountered Whitfield Arnett, a resident of the house who was sitting in a chair. Like the others, Arnett was unarmed and defenseless. The defendant fired two shots at Arnett, hitting him in the neck, chest and fingers.

Andre A. Benjamin, meanwhile, had left the house moments before the rampage began and was on the front walk when he heard the shots. He crept back into the house and ran into the defendant, who had already shot Arnett. The defendant shot Andre A. Benjamin in the chest. He then fled through the back door. He was arrested four days later.

Monique Nalle died from her wounds. Andre L. Benjamin called 911 seeking help. The riveting call was played for the jury, and the jury could hear the 911 operator plead for Andre L. Benjamin to live, as his breathing became increasingly labored. Andre L. Benjamin survived, but lost the sight in his right eye as a result of the shooting. Arnett can no longer eat solid foods and suffered nerve damage. Andre A. Benjamin suffered no permanent physical injuries.

The defense was intoxication. Seneca Benjamin testified in his defense and claimed on direct examination that he was high on PCP and had little memory of the event. However, on cross-examination, he admitted that he had argued with Nalle and become angry. He then admitted that he knew what he was doing when he grabbed the gun from his waistband, and that he intended to shoot Nalle in the head. He also admitted that he intended to shoot the others.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen praised Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Detective Alfred Thomas Austin-Braxton, whose tireless efforts led to the arrest of the defendant and the presence at trial of critical witnesses. He also praised Detectives Brian Wise and Michael Pepperman, who assisted in the investigation of the case and the preparation for trial. He praised Evidence Technicians Stanley Rembish, Ralph Nitz, Michael DePrince and J.D. Smith, who took painstaking efforts to gather firearms evidence from multiple locations.

U.S. Attorney Machen praised MPD Officer Grant Greenwalt, who led the presentation of the "360 degree view," a sophisticated and innovative method of presenting a panoramic display of a crime scene that makes it appear as if the viewer is present at the scene. This trial was the first time that the 360 view had been presented in Superior Court. In addition, U.S. Attorney Machen praised officers Raymond Hawkins, James Love and Thomas Krmenac, who responded to the scene under extremely dangerous circumstances and assisted in the investigation. U.S. Attorney Machen praised Paralegal Debra Joyner, who provided critical support work during the investigation and trial, and Litigation Support Specialist Leif Hickling, who prepared numerous

trial exhibits. U.S. Attorney Machen praised Victim Advocate Marcia Rinker for the extraordinary services she provided to the victim's family and witnesses. Finally, he praised Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven B. Snyder, who investigated and tried this matter.

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