

Antoine Garner Prime Suspect In Amanda Wienckowski Murder

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Antoine Garner, thought to be the last person to see 20-year-old Amanda Wienckowski alive on Dec. 5, 2008, was sentenced to 18 years in 2013 for a string of crimes that included rape and the attempted strangulation of a paid sexual partner.

Amanda was dropped off at Garner's Spring Street home in Buffalo's East Side to trade sex for drugs by Adam Patterson, an older man she lived with on the Tuscarora Reservation in Lewiston.

When her naked, frozen and battered body was found across the street from Garner's house five weeks later, it was apparent to everyone but the Erie County Medical Examiner's office that she'd been beaten, and finger mark bruising on her neck suggested strangulation as the cause of death.

The medical examiner's office has since released three contradictory versions of the autopsy report, one finding that she died of a heroin overdose, the second suggesting she was asphyxiated during sex with a heavysset man after taking a large dose of GHB – known as the “date rape” drug and the third simply stating that a cause of death could not be determined.

He was named a “person of interest” by Buffalo police in the case, but was never charged. And although the case was never specifically brought up in Garner's subsequent court appearances, the specter of young Amanda Wienckowski loomed large in the courtroom

Garner pleaded guilty as charged to three counts of Rape in the Third Degree and three counts of Criminal Sexual Act in the Third Degree. These are the highest charges for which Garner could have been convicted had he gone to trial.

Garner admitted that between December, 2008 and January 2009 – the exact time frame of Amanda's disappearance and murder -- he raped and sodomized a 16-year-old-girl, impregnating her.

Under another indictment, Garner pleaded guilty as charged to two counts of Robbery in the First Degree and two counts of Robbery in the Second Degree. Garner admitted that on July 2, 2011, he orchestrated and led a home invasion in the Town of Clarence. Money and jewelry were stolen as the victim was terrorized in her home at gunpoint.

Garner was also convicted following a jury trial of Strangulation in Second Degree and Assault in the Third Degree by an Erie County trial jury. These charges stemmed from a June 26, 2011 attack upon a woman in Buffalo. Garner had paid the woman for sex and began strangling her during the act.

At his sentencing, Amanda's mother, Leslie Brill Meserole, sat holding back the tears.

"I'm sentencing you only on those crimes," Judge Kenneth F. Case told Garner, after giving him 18 years. "The law prohibits me from sentencing you on any crimes that people believe you committed or suspect you committed."

After Garner was led away, Meserole said, Judge Case motioned her into his chambers, where he told her he was sorry about her daughter.

"I thanked him," she said.