



Rod Underhill, District Attorney
1021 SW Fourth Avenue, Room 600
Portland, OR 97204-1193
Phone: 503-988-3162 Fax: 503-988-3643
www.mcda.us

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Jury unanimously convicts Clayton Lamont Howard of two counts of abuse of a corpse in the second degree

Late Tuesday evening, a 12-person jury unanimously convicted 56-year-old Clayton Lamont Howard of two counts of abuse of a corpse in the second degree following a lengthy trial in Multnomah County Circuit Court.

During the 10 day trial, the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office testified 59-year-old Neta Mangum died on Thursday March 21, 2019 of an accidental drug overdose inside her residence.

The jury found that by concealing Ms. Mangum's body with clothing, plastic totes and a mattress and then having sex on that mattress with a different woman, Mr. Howard unlawfully abused the corpse of Ms. Mangum.

This investigation started on Friday March 22, 2019 at approximately 7 p.m. when Ms. Mangum's family called 9-1-1 to report her missing.

When police arrived at Ms. Mangum's residence they located Mr. Howard and another woman.

The other woman with Mr. Howard testified that she met Ms. Mangum and Mr. Howard several days prior and that Ms. Mangum allowed her to move in so she could get off the streets.

The woman testified that she had last seen Ms. Mangum in the very early morning hours of March 21, 2019 shortly before she went to sleep in the living room. When she woke up hours later, she asked Mr. Howard where Ms. Mangum was.

Mr. Howard claimed that Ms. Mangum had gone to the coast with a man named "Elvis" and that she would be back on Sunday.

During the day of March 21, 2019, Mr. Howard and the other woman used drugs and had sex multiple times in Ms. Mangum's bedroom and specifically on the mattress that covered her body. The other woman was unaware of Ms. Mangum's whereabouts.

Throughout the time Ms. Mangum was missing, Mr. Howard used her cellphone to send her family text messages and pretended to be Ms. Mangum. Her family testified they knew immediately, based on the style and substance of the text messages, someone else was using her phone.

When police contacted Mr. Howard on Friday March 22, 2019, he was found in possession of Ms. Mangum's cellphone and other personal items including her bank cards and jewelry.

During trial, Mr. Howard testified that he did not call 9-1-1 after finding Ms. Mangum's body because his parole officer had previously ordered him not to have contact with Ms. Mangum and that he feared he would be arrested if law enforcement found him inside her apartment.

During that same testimony, Mr. Howard confirmed he has prior felony convictions for rape in the first degree, robbery in the first degree and burglary in the first degree.

Furthermore, he testified that upon finding Ms. Mangum deceased, he attempted to render first aid and that the reason he covered her body was to fulfill a "dying declaration," despite his earlier admission to police that he hid her body to avoid going to jail.

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The jury rejected these claims.

Sentencing is scheduled for December 3, 2018 with Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Thomas M. Ryan.

The jury acquitted Mr. Howard of one count of identity theft.

It was the state's theory that Mr. Howard committed the crime of identity theft by using Ms. Mangum's bank cards, without permission, hours after her death to either attempt to withdraw money from her accounts or to check the account balances on at least 15 separate occasions.

Prior to closing arguments, the court found that the state had not proven Count 4 of the indictment, which charged Mr. Howard with one count of attempted theft in the second degree for allegedly having plans to pawn Ms. Mangum's jewelry after her death.

On November 21, 2019, Judge Ryan found Mr. Howard in contempt of court for using obscene language towards a witness upon the conclusion of her testimony. The court's order is documented in the Oregon eCourt Information (OECI) system under case number 19CN05370.

This case is being prosecuted by Multnomah County Senior Deputy District Attorney Traci Anderson who supervises the Multnomah County District Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit.

It was investigated by members of the Portland Police Bureau's Homicide Detail. The lead investigator on the case was PPB Detective Todd Gradwahl.

A booking photo of Mr. Howard is available through the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office.

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Contact: Brent Weisberg, Communications Director
Multnomah County District Attorney's Office
Phone: 503.988.6567 | Email: Brent.Weisberg@mcdca.us