

**Rex v Joshua Alexander**

**Sentencing Remarks**

**Central Criminal Court**

**HHJ David Aubrey KC (sitting in retirement)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024**

**Introduction**

The background to your case is sadly all too familiar. It is one of turf wars, territory, violence between rival groups and gangs of youths and consequential tragedy and grief. Whilst having considered your welfare, your age of 17 years and 10 months, the nature and number of the offences, and the public interest in open justice, I now impose an excepting direction pursuant to section 45(5) of the Youth and Justice Criminal Evidence Act 1999. Accordingly, having performed the balancing exercise between the competing interests, any reporting restriction as to your anonymity is now lifted.

The enormity of that which you did or participated in is, that you now fall to be sentenced for intending to kill no less than 4 persons and in respect of one, whilst intending to kill another, you killed, murdered an innocent woman who was behind her front door in her own home.

On 30<sup>th</sup> October, at this Court, you were convicted by a jury after a 2 month trial of the murder of Lianne Gordon on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (Count 5), the attempted murder of Raheim Tan-Ming (Count 6), and a like offence upon Amani Adams-McGuire on the same day (Count 7).

You were also convicted of offences, the subject of Count 2, an offence of affray, Count 3, possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life, and Count 4, having an article with a blade or point, namely a knife. All those offences were committed on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023.

You also fall to be sentenced for a further offence of attempted murder, again you were convicted by a jury, this time sitting at Snaresbrook Crown Court. Sentence was adjourned to the conclusion of the trial over which I presided and sentence in respect of all offences was adjourned to today's date, the anniversary of when you first went out on a "ride out" with another, jointly armed with a firearm and machete.

You then on 5<sup>th</sup> December went out on another “ride out”, this time, I am satisfied, with deadly intent and when a totally innocent woman, not your target or targets lost her life.

Finally you fall to be sentenced for an offence of possession of crack cocaine with intent to supply to another. On 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024 you pleaded guilty to that offence

You are 17 years of age, having been born on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2007. At the time of the commission of the offences you were 16 years 10 months, somewhat younger in respect of your conviction at Snaresbrook Crown Court. I will return to the facts of the cases and you shortly.

### **Lianne Gordon**

But firstly I want to speak of Lianne Gordon. She, as I say, was not the target in this pre planned attack of which I am satisfied was in truth a determined attack by you with a firearm to execute members of a rival gang. She was just 42 years of age, a mother of two children, all of whom had recently returned from holiday in Jamaica. She was in her home at 1 Vine Close behind the front door, partly open. You, I have no doubt, thought it to be another. She was shot through the head and died shortly thereafter. Her home should have been a sanctuary, a place of safety. It was however where she met her death at your hands whilst you were in possession of a firearm.

The Court has received powerful and poignant statements from members of such a closely knit family and friends. You have devastated a family, their lives will never be the same. You have caused unimaginable grief to the family and friends of Lianne Gordon who have listened to the evidence during the trial in dignified silence as to the cruel manner in which you murdered her. They all speak of her qualities and their loss. No sentence this Court impose can ever compensate them for the loss of a loved one which is profound and will last forever.

I turn chronologically to the facts of each offence

### **The facts**

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 during the afternoon Hakim Malone was on a train and having disembarked at Hackney Central Station, he was attacked by a number of young

men, one had a knife who repeatedly stabbed him in the chest puncturing his heart, another was in possession of a gun, aimed it at the victim, and fired. Your victim, who did not cooperate with the police underwent emergency treatment at the scene. He had received five stab wounds to the chest, both lungs and heart were punctured; he also had a gunshot wound to the thigh. But for the skill of those who treated him he would have died. You did not inflict any violence, your role was to inform one of your gang members of his presence in Hackney, your victim being in a rival gang, a member of the London Fields gang, and in your territory and on your turf. You were in truth acting as a scout in what the trial judge described when sentencing your co-accused as a “meticulously arranged hit”. Whether it was or was not pre planned and pre-arranged, you had provided information to others in order that the attack could take place and it did so in the presence of innocent members of the public. For the avoidance of any doubt the jury found that you, with others, had intended to kill your victim.

In respect of that offence you had been bailed after your arrest on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023 with conditions not to enter Hackney and a curfew. Thus it is that the offences on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023, of which you were convicted by the jury at this Court were committed on bail, and at the very least in breach of one of your bail convictions

The jury at Snaresbrook Crown Court convicted you on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024; you were then remanded into custody, and whilst sentence took place on your co-accused, your sentence was transferred to this Court to await the conclusion of the trial.

I turn to the offences for which you fall to be sentenced, having been convicted by the jury at this Court.

Notwithstanding you had been bailed with conditions to await your trial at Snaresbrook Crown Court you are so embedded in the gang culture and membership of the Pembury gang that you returned to the area of Hackney, and in particular, and on a daily basis, to 8 Bodney Road, a house which contained a number of flats, one of which, if not more, was where you and your associates congregated. Flat 1 8 Bodney Road was a hub for the gang, if not its headquarters. It was from there you would supply controlled drugs.

It was also from there, that with another, you rode off on bikes to 1 Vine Close, precisely a year ago to today. One of you was armed with a machete, the other with

a gun. Three days later, not having achieved your aim on **2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023**, you rode off, again from Flat 1 8 Bodney Road, and you most certainly had a gun on this occasion, the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023. It was the same gun that had been used and fired on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. You set off, I am satisfied intending to kill. It was pre planned and pre-arranged. Not only did you intend to kill, you intended to kill others in a rival gang and you set off so to do, either on your own volition or under orders. Two of your victims, the subjects of Counts 5 and 6, Raheim Tan Ming and Amani Adams-McGuire, have failed to cooperate with the police investigation. Your third victim, you believed was another rival gang member and believed was behind the front door of 1 Vine Close. It was not he, not a gang member or associate but an innocent mother of children. Lianne Gordon.

I return briefly to the events of **2<sup>nd</sup> December**. You and another had left the flat at 17.30pm, both of you armed. You had both disguised your faces and were wearing balaclavas. Such was your determination and precision, albeit your targets were not at Vine Close that day, you cycled to Hackey Downs Park, away from any CCTV cameras and test fired the gun. It was filmed not by you but by your associate whom you would not name in evidence on a phone.

Having satisfied yourselves the gun was fully operational you made your way to the vicinity of Vine Close. The gun was discharged on 4 occasions, on one of those occasions a bullet went through a car parked on the driveway of 1 Vine Close. You were convicted by the jury of affray, possession of a knife and possession of the firearm with intent to endanger life. Fortunately no one was injured. It was a typical ride out to an opposing gang's territory, you, disguised and armed with a gun and a machete.

No doubt frustrated that your mission had not been accomplished, on **5<sup>th</sup> December** you sent that chilling message in the morning to Kaymound Gordon-Harris "Tell me where your friends are"

You anticipated that rival gang members or associates would be in Vine Close and so it was you set off, again on bike, again with your face disguised. This time you were on your own, but you were determined. It was a premeditated targeted attack. You were on a mission that night to execute members of your opposing gang. You

arrived at Vine Close just before 18.30 hours. Amani Adams-McGuire and Raheim Sterling were outside 1 Vine Close

You approached them; a witness described you as being 2 metres away shooting at them. Your victims ran behind a parked car on the driveway, you leant over the vehicle and continued to fire the weapon in their direction before chasing them around the vehicle. You then walked to the doorway of 1 Vine Close. The door was slightly open. You believed another gang member was behind the door and you shot downwards through the opening of the door. A witness spoke of two shots, one of which struck Lianne Gordon in the head and killed her almost instantly. In total you discharged your firearm on no less than 8 occasions whilst at the scene, before riding off and back to base, at Flat 1 8 Bodney Road. Raheim Tam-Ming had been shot in the thigh, Amani Adams McGuire shot in the right buttock but the jury were satisfied you had intended to kill each that night and I am satisfied you had intended to kill another, the person behind the front door of 1 Vine Close but it was in fact Lianne Gordon.

You were arrested on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and at your home address were found 12 packages of crack cocaine weighing in total 1.02 grams

After your arrest on 8<sup>th</sup> December I am satisfied you have shown no remorse whatsoever notwithstanding you had murdered an innocent person in her own home who was not the intended target. Indeed as is illustrated in those lyrics, found in your cell on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024, you were not only glorifying in that which you had done but also not caring about your victims.

### **The law and sentencing structure**

For the murder of Lianne Gordon I must and do impose a sentence of detention during His Majesty's Pleasure. I also have to decide the minimum term which you will serve before you are eligible to be considered for release by the Parole Board.

It is important that you, and everyone concerned with this case, should understand what a minimum term means. A minimum term is not a fixed term after which you will automatically be released. It is the minimum time which you will spend in custody before your case can be considered by the Parole Board. It will then be for the Parole

Board to say whether or not you are safe to be released. If they do not, you will remain in custody.

If and when you are released, you will still be subject to licence. This will remain the case for the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence were to be revoked, you would be recalled to prison to continue to serve your life sentence in custody.

I also have to impose sentences of custody for your other offences. However, I have to impose on you a total sentence which reflects the totality of your offending behaviour and many of those offences are extremely grave in themselves. Accordingly I must and will increase the overall sentence and minimum term I am required to impose. I will therefore take account of your other offences when setting the and a just and proportionate minimum term, and then impose concurrent sentences for your other offences.

In addition, I have to recognise the approach to be adopted when sentencing children, i.e. those under 18 and will apply the guideline on sentencing children and young persons. I must therefore consider not only your chronological age but your emotional development, your maturity and any vulnerability.

The offence of murder involved culpability at a particularly high level. In consequence of your age of 16 years 10 months, the starting point is one of 20 years custody. Had you been 17 years the starting point would have been 27 years, and if an adult 30 years custody

It is aggravated in its seriousness because firstly it involved a significant degree of planning in a gang motivated attack. Secondly, and whilst it was not your intention to kill Lianne Gordon, it was your intention to kill another, the fact remains that your victim was particularly vulnerable, being in her own home, hidden by her front door. Thirdly you committed the offences on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December whilst you were on bail for the offence of attempted murder of Hakim Malone. Finally, and I add that the Court must ensure there is no element of double counting, the gun has never been recovered and you had disposed of your clothing, phone and bike.

**I turn to the other offences** which must be reflected in the length of the minimum term you must serve in custody, and first the attempted murder of Hakim Malone. In that regard I turn to the appropriate categorisation for an adult issued by the Sentencing Council and thereafter make an appropriate reduction of approximately one third to reflect your age at the time of offending.

The sentencing judge when sentencing your co accused placed the offence in **Category 2A** which, for an adult has a starting point of 30 years custody and stated that if an adult, the starting point would have been 35 years custody. I note that a defendant who was 16 years at the time of the offences received a sentence of 19 years custody

In respect of the offences committed on **2<sup>nd</sup> December**, had you been an adult, the **affray** is a Category 1A offence which has a starting point of 2 years custody; the **possession of a knife, a Category 1A offence** with a starting point of 18 months custody, and the possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life is a **category 3A** offence which has a starting point of 5 years custody, again had you been an adult.

In respect of the remaining offences committed on **5<sup>th</sup> December**, the two offences of **attempted murder, the subject of Counts 6 and 7** the Court places each offence into **category A**, very high culpability and having considered the medical evidence, or lack thereof into **Harm 3**. Each offence thus has, had you been an adult, a starting point of 25 years custody.

Finally, the drugs offence falls within significant role Category 3 which has a starting point of 4 and a half years for an adult.

Ultimately the issue for this Court is to arrive at a just and proportionate minimum term taking account of all your offending, your age, your development and any personal mitigation

### **The defendant and personal mitigation**

I have read a psychological report dated 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023, a comprehensive report about your background from Colin Carswell an anti human trafficking expert, and, numerous character references and a pre-sentence report dated 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024. I take into account everything that is said about you into account. You were 16 years 10 months at the time of the commission of the offences, a little younger when you committed the offence at Hackney Central Station. You are now 17 years of age, 18 on 4th February 2025.

I have also had the opportunity to assess you during the trial and in particular over a number of days whilst you were giving evidence.

The Court recognises at your age you have not attained full maturity and that at a young age you had been exploited and were exploited to join a gang. You were then moved with your family in an endeavour by the authorities to remove you from the gang culture. You took the decision to return to gang life, and even after you were remanded on bail to await your trial at Snaresbrook Crown Court, a further opportunity arose. You may not have reached full maturity, but I have find nothing by way of mitigation to suggest that you were not aware of the impact and distress you were causing to your victims. You may well have been susceptible to peer pressure but there is nothing in your emotional and developmental age to suggest you were unaware of the consequences of your actions. I do however take into account your traumatic background, your unhappy childhood, your initial exploitation and that you were a junior member of the gang and not a controller. Nonetheless, as I have said, I am satisfied you had every opportunity to remove yourself from gang life, it was you who decided not to do so, without pressure from others and you knew full well the consequences of that which you were doing

### **Conclusion**

I find that the only mitigation is your age, your unfortunate background and your initial exploitation.

Many young black men growing up in Hackney face similar pressures to those that you faced but do not fall prey to such temptations and become assets to their community. You had the opportunity to do likewise. You chose otherwise and had it not been for your young age, the overall sentence would have been much longer than it is.

Ultimately the Court must determine to what extent in consequence of your age and your background, the Court reduces what would otherwise be the appropriate and just minimum term reflecting all the offences for which you now fall to be sentenced.

That involves the exercise of judgment in relation to competing public interests, which in this case is, in my judgment, an extremely difficult task, in consequence of the many grave offences you have committed, as against your young age and the hope, that when you do finally mature, you will come to realise the pain and suffering you have caused.

## **Sentence**

**Joshua Alexander Please stand up**

All the sentences will run concurrently

Attempted Murder of Hakim Malone 16 years Detention

Count 2 Affray 2 years Detention and Training Order

Count 3 Possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life 3 years Detention

Count 4 Possession of a bladed article 2 years Detention and Training Order

Count 6 Attempted Murder 14 years Detention

Count 7 Attempted Murder 14 years Detention

Possession of cocaine with intent to supply to another 30 months Detention

Count 5 Murder Detention during His Majesty's Pleasure

**The minimum term will be 29 years, before I make a final adjustment to deduct the number of days that you have already spent on remand in custody. I understand that you have spent 357 days on remand in custody. That number of days will be deducted from the minimum term that I have just indicated when I pass sentence.**

**For the avoidance of any doubt, if Count 5 had stood on its own the minimum term would have been one of 24 years**

**The statutory surcharge applies to this sentence.**

**Forfeiture and Destruction Order of the drugs**

**For the murder of Lianne Gordon, I sentence you to detention at His Majesty's pleasure for life with a minimum term to serve of 28 years and 8 days.**

**You may go down.**

**If the number of days is incorrect or any sentence the case must return to Court within 56 days**

**Commend officers**

**Commend family**