

REX

-v-

MATEUS JOHANNES

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Mateus Johannes you may remain seated until I tell you to stand.
2. You have pleaded guilty to the murder of Claudia Kambanza
3. She was just 23 years of age and your girlfriend and you attacked her in her own bedsit room and then pursued after she escaped and fled outside into the street. You chased and caught up with her and then brutally stabbed her twice and also stamped on her in a truly appalling act of violence resulting from you misplaced belief that she had been unfaithful or was seeking attention from other men.

Brief facts

4. Claudia Kambanza originally came to this country from Namibia in August 2022 and started studying at Hull College in September 2023. Her mother, with whom she had a close bond, has described her kind and friendly, hardworking and dependable. Her aim was to qualify as an accountant.
5. As her mother explained in a most moving victim impact statement, the terrible and unimaginable pain of her loss weighs heavily on her parents and three siblings and her mother has described how she feels that loss on a daily basis. They now face a life sentence of grief with no release date. The impact on the family has been huge.
6. Miss Kambanza was living at 6, Hinderwell Street in Hull; a house of multiple occupancy in which five tenants lived in separate rooms.
7. You were her boyfriend. It appears that you had met years before in Namibia and had supported her financially, including paying for her flights and accommodation when she had travelled from Namibia to the UK. She spoke to you very regularly on a phone that you had bought for her and the relationship appeared to be a happy one; certainly from her perspective.

8. You were living and working in Peterborough in homecare and travelled up to see Miss Kambanza in Hull sometimes staying overnight.
9. Miss Kambanza was also employed in homecare and you had got her a job, through a man called 'Alex'. For some reason your relationship soured with Alex.
10. Somehow, the precise detail does not matter, a plan was hatched that Miss Kambanza should tell Alex that you had separated, the aim being for her to secure further employment through him as otherwise your relationship may be a hinderance.
11. On the evening of 23rd January 2024, Miss Kambanza told her friend and fellow resident 6, Hinderwell Street Ms Ishimwe that she was changing her WhatsApp status to get attention from Alex. She then posted, *'...with a heavy heart that I share the news that Matthew and I have decided to part ways, please stop bothering me....'* Alex then contacted her.
12. Miss Kambanza told Miss Ishimwe that the contact she had with Alex was only so that she could secure her job, not because she was romantically interested in him.
13. Two days later on 25th January 2024, you told Miss Kambanza that you had spoken to your mother, who had agreed she could have a baby with you. When she hung up the phone, Miss Ishimwe who was with her at the time recalls her being 'really happy', believing that you were about to propose to her. She told her *'MJ is my life, I trust him with my life'*.
14. However matters then took a very serious turn. On the evening of 25th January, you had an argument with Miss Kambanza during which you accused her of being a prostitute. She then blocked your call. You had told her that you would collect your belongings the next time you saw her on 13th February. This was a lie. Miss Kambanza had no idea that you were on your way to her; travelling to Hull. You also lied to your supervisor at work that your brother had got stabbed to give an excuse for not being at work and later that he had died. With a few hours of that message, you stabbed Miss Kambanza.
15. You had become angry because you had been accessing Miss Kambanza's WhatsApp account, but she would have been unaware of this
16. You recorded yourself stating that she would pay for what she had done and that you would keep evidence for, as you put it "the last day, the final day and that the day will come when she will cry and her mother will cry also"
17. You took the laptop to Hull and on the way spoke to someone about Miss Kambanza having an affair. For the avoidance of doubt after a full review of all messages there is no evidence of Miss Kambanza engaging in sexual activity with any man. You were wholly wrong. All she was doing was following through with the plan to get work with a man who you had fallen out with. However even if she had decided to end the relationship that was her right and also to be able to do so free from any violence and intimidation.

26th January

18. At 1.38 am you were captured on CCTV arriving at Doncaster Train station and getting a taxi. At 2.32am you arrived near Miss Kambanza's address. At 2.45am you rang her. She told her friend Ms Ishimwe who had been watching a film with her that she should leave as you were coming around.
19. You entered the building and started shouting at Miss Kambanza. Once in her room you attacked her. This could be heard from outside.
20. Blood staining was later found to extend over the bed, there is a handprint in blood, and there was blood on the adjacent wall and the floor.
21. After this assault and prior to the fatal assault in the road. Miss Kambanza who had escaped from your assault can be seen on CCTV with an area of dark staining to her right forehead and eye. Post mortem it was noted that she had a sizeable incised wound to the forehead caused by a knife and other head injuries. I am satisfied so that I am sure that she had suffered a serious injury at your hands whilst in her own room; her own home.
22. Ms Ishimwe who was worried by the noise from the room tried knocking on the door and then asking a neighbour for help.
23. Miss Kambanza was then seen running away down Hinderwell Street shouting "help me, please help me" she was running as fast as she could to save herself as you were following in pursuit. It was not a short chase.
24. At the top of Hindwell street, a distance of over 80 metres from the house, you caught and grabbed her and could be heard shouting "tell me his name". So you did not attack immediately. Miss Kambanza's was bleeding from a head wound and you then hit her, and threw her to the floor. She looked barely conscious. You then stabbed her with the knife you had brought from the property.
25. The first stab wound was to the right lower abdomen. The Knife penetrated 9 cm, went fully through the stomach and penetrated a major blood vessel. This was the fatal wound
26. The second was just below her right breast. You had stabbed with such force that the knife handle had broken off. You left the knife protruding out of her chest.
27. Even that level of savage violence was not enough and when she fell to the floor you stamped on her.
28. In my view it is clear beyond any doubt at all that during this assault you intended to kill her; there is no sensible conclusion to the contrary given the brutality and double stabbing
29. A passer by Mr Ryan Fox-Hockney has shouted at you to stop when he heard Miss Kambanza screaming and as he approached you ran off.

30. You had left Miss Kambanza to die. She was clearly in pain. Ms Ishimwe held her hand. She was able to speak asking not to be left and for water. Mr Fox-Hockney and Ms Ishimwe did all they could to help. The knife was still inside her body. When Pc Mc Ewan arrived, he described her as clearly in distress and pain.
31. A paramedic was quickly on the scene and an ambulance arrived within five minutes. Miss Kambanza kept repeating your name. On arrival at hospital she was still conscious and able to confirm her name but was struggling to breathe and then went into cardiac arrest. Emergency surgery could not save her life.
32. At 3.23 you rang a friend to tell him that you had stabbed your girlfriend for cheating on you and disrespecting you. You then called the Police and told them that you had been fighting with your girlfriend and had stabbed her.
33. You did not answer any questions in interview but told a psychiatrist that you had seen messages Miss Kambanza had sent to another man. You then claimed that voices told you to stab her and kill yourself. Following a detailed review by two experts with the benefit of all available material no psychiatric defence has been pursued.

Schedule 21

34. For the grave offence of murder there is only one sentence prescribed by law that is imprisonment for life. That is the sentence I shall impose upon you in due course. However, I am required to determine the minimum period you should serve in prison before you are eligible to be considered for release on parole.
35. It is most important that you and everyone concerned with this case should understand what the minimum term means. The minimum term is not a fixed term after which you will be automatically released but the minimum time that you will spend in custody before your case can be considered by the parole board. It will be for the parole board to say at that time whether or not you will be released. If and when you are released, you will still be subject to licence and this will be the case the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence were to be revoked you would be recalled to prison to serve your life sentence in custody.
36. In coming to the appropriate minimum term I must first decide where this case falls within schedule 21

Starting point

37. Here you left the room in the house where an assault had taken place and took the decision to take the knife with you to pursue Miss Kambanza. It is correctly accepted on your behalf that in doing so you took a knife to the scene such that the starting point is 25 years.

38. I fully recognise that the starting points set out in the schedule do not create impenetrable compartments and should be applied flexibly. Every case will be subject to its own specific and individual features of aggravation and mitigation and in all cases what must be achieved is a just result. The starting point is by no means necessarily the end point
39. However I reject the submission that the starting point should be somewhere between 15 and 25 years. The correct starting point is 25 years is very amply justified on the facts of this case as I have outlined them.

Aggravating factors

40. Turning to the factors set out in the schedule I am sure that you travelled to Hull without warning Miss Kambanza (and after lying to your employer) with the intention of confronting her because you believed she had been unfaithful and had disrespected you. However, although you intended to confront her I cannot be sure that you planned to murder her, or indeed when you decided to seriously assault her. Accordingly I cannot find on the criminal standard that planning and premeditation are aggravating factors
41. Miss Kambanza suffered significantly both mentally and physically before her death. She must have been terrified as she was seriously assaulted in her room and then chased down the street before being caught and fatally assaulted including being stamped on. She was then conscious and in pain when on the floor at the scene through to her collapse at the hospital. Her suffering is an aggravating factor. This is linked to a non-statutory aggravating factor; the prolonged nature of the attack from the assault in her room through to stamping on her head after you had stabbed her. In the interim you had to chase her to continue the attack. This was of a different nature to most of fatal knife attacks blighting the lives of so many people this country. It was more vicious and persistent.
42. Turning to the factor of an abuse of a position of trust, whilst strictly speaking this does not strictly apply, your relationship falls within the scope of Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The domestic context of the offending behaviour makes the offending more serious because it represents a violation of the trust and security that normally exists between people in an intimate relationship. Domestic abuse offences are regarded as particularly serious within the criminal justice system. Your belief that as she was your girlfriend she had no right to act as you believed she had and that it was disrespecting you was the root cause of your murderous attack.
43. As for other factors the fatal assault was in public and no doubt will live with those who witnessed it for the rest of their lives.

44. These factors when combined warrant a significant increase from the starting point.

Mitigating factors

45. As I have set out, I am not satisfied that the attack was premeditated.

46. I reject the suggestion that you intended only to cause really serious harm. You had murderous intent when you chased Miss Kambanza down the street if not before. There is no other sensible conclusion given the ferocity of your attack when you caught up with her.
47. You contacted the police and waited to be arrested. Given what had happened and the number of witnesses you had no hope of not being identified as the person who had attacked Miss Kambanza; but I accept you did notify the Police where you were and this is to your credit. As for remorse; you have expressed little and blamed voices for the attack.
48. You are effectively of good character, as you have only one minor prior conviction for dishonesty.
49. You pleaded guilty at the first available opportunity on 2nd December 2024 after a period of 10 months during which there was investigation of your psychiatric history and condition given your claim to have heard voices. This required reports on your behalf and also a prosecution report; which concluded that you do not, and did not, have a psychotic illness. Having considered all the reports I cannot be sure, as the Prosecution suggest is the case, that you were malingering. Offenders pleading guilty to murder will also receive some reduction in the number of years that they must serve before becoming eligible to apply for release on life licence.. Murder trials may take weeks of court time and consume a great deal of police and Crown Prosecution Service resources, both of which have been very heavily stretched in recent years. In addition, participating in a murder trial is likely to be very traumatic for any witnesses who may have to testify. However careful consideration has to be given to the extent of any reduction for a guilty plea and to the need to ensure that the minimum term properly reflects the seriousness of the offence. Here the reduction that I have applied is one of four and a half years.

Bladed article

50. You also pleaded guilty to having an article with a blade or point, contrary to section 139(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. This was an essential ingredient within the murder offence and reflected within the starting point chosen.

Credit for time on remand

51. Credit must be given for time on remand.
52. You will have spent 376 days in custody for this offence.

Associated matters

53. I direct that if the surcharge applies in this case in respect of any of you it should be drawn

up in the appropriate amount.

54. A transcript of these sentencing remarks be attached to your file for the benefit of the Parole Board. Compensation is not appropriate.
55. I also wish to praise the brave actions of the members of the public involved and also the work of the emergency services and of the Police. Everything that could be done was done to try and save Miss Kambanza's life.

Sentence

56. Stand up please.
57. Mateus Johannes for the murder of Claudia Kambanza I sentence you to life imprisonment. You will serve a minimum term of 23 and a half years less the 376 days you have served on remand.
58. For the offence of possessing a bladed article there will be no separate penalty.
59. Take him down.

Mr Justice Cotter

Hull Crown Court

7 February 2025