

REX

v

JOHN BELFIELD

Speaking Note for

SENTENCING REMARKS

John Belfield,

1. Yesterday afternoon, the jury found you guilty of conspiracy to rob and the murder of Thomas Campbell.
2. It now falls to me to sentence you. In so doing, I only make finding of fact against you when I am sure of those findings. My conclusions will be consistent with the verdicts of the jury.
3. Mr Campbell was no saint. Like you, he was involved in the sale and distribution of illicit drugs. But he was also a human being, and the manner of his death was horrific. His friends and family have had to sit through the description of the injuries you inflicted on him and the suffering he was forced to endure. That can only have been a dreadful experience for them.
4. Terry Campbell, Thomas' father, has provided a Victim Personal Statement which was read to the court. He describes the profound grief that the killing of his son has had on their family. It is plain that he was greatly loved by his family. It has affected all of the family and has now left Thomas Campbell's two children without a father, others without a brother and a son.
5. You, John Belfield, played what I conclude was a leading role in the conspiracy to rob and in the attack that led ultimately to Mr Campbell's death. That conspiracy consisted of an agreement for a gang of thugs, of which you were the leader, to attack Mr Campbell's home and steal from him drugs which you believed he kept there, along with other valuables.
6. Just as you had been at the centre of the conspiracy to rob Mr Campbell, so you were at the heart of the group who murdered him. No one outside that group can know

exactly what happened inside number 17 Riverside on the night of the 2nd-3rd July 2022 or precisely who delivered which blows with knives, boots, or fists. Nor is it known precisely who decided to humiliate Mr Campbell by stripping him naked. Nor who it was who decided to inflict yet further pain and suffering on Mr Campbell by tipping near boiling water over his naked buttocks. But you, I have no doubt, were the leader of that gang.

7. The injuries that the group of you inflicted were described in detail by the pathologist. They were horrendous. In the end death was caused by multiple knife injuries, blunt force head injuries and asphyxiating pressure to the neck. But, in my judgment, the prosecution's description of what happened over a period of almost two hours after the group of you ambushed Mr Campbell on the doorstep of his home, was accurate. Mr Campbell was tortured and was tortured to the point of death. I find as a fact that this grotesque mistreatment began as a means of extracting information from Mr Campbell about the whereabouts of his drugs. It was a murder in the context of a robbery. But I also find as a fact that you took pleasure in the infliction of pain on him.
8. Mr Campbell was a rival of yours in the grimy world of illicit drugs and you regarded it as acceptable to steal his stash of drugs from him, if necessary by use of violence. But at least as significant, he was your rival for the affections of Demi Leigh Driver. I reject in its entirety your explanation that you were happy to split up from Ms Driver. I have no doubt that the fact that Ms Driver was now the partner of Mr Campbell was an important part of your motivation for what you did on the 2nd July. You suggested in evidence that you were being sarcastic when you described yourself, by means of emojis, as heartbroken after she took up with Thomas Campbell. I conclude that that is exactly what you felt.
9. You wanted Thomas Campbell to suffer. That is why you and your gang attacked him as he opened his front door and bundled him into the house; you wanted to ensure he was utterly at your mercy. That is why you had purchased gaffer tape from B&Q two days earlier; you and your gang planned to use that gaffer tape to immobilize Mr Campbell whilst you cut him about, which is precisely what you did. That is why you or those acting at your direction, systematically cut parallel lines across his face; you wanted to disfigure him because you wanted him to believe that, even if he escaped with his life, no woman would want him. And that is why you used a tourniquet on his

arm after he was slashed across his arm; you didn't want him to die too quickly. I have no doubt you took pleasure from his pain.

10. Against that background I turn to sentence you. The sentence I impose on you for murder is required, as a matter of law, to be imprisonment for life. I have in addition to fix the minimum term before your case can even be considered by the parole board. In my view, as serious as this case is, it does not justify a whole life term.
11. I have considered the sentencing remarks of Mr Justice Goose in the case of Steven, Cleworth and Colleen Campbell. But I have to sentence you on the findings I make based on the evidence I heard.
12. I apply paragraph 3 of schedule 21 of the sentencing code, which sets out circumstances in which a starting point of 30 years is appropriate. I have concluded that this was both a murder for gain and a murder involving sadistic conduct. It follows from that alone that I must move beyond 30 years in fixing the minimum term.
13. There are, in addition, a number of significantly aggravating features in this case. I note that Mr Campbell endured very significant mental and physical suffering before death, and you used sustained and excessive violence towards the victim. Whilst that is undoubtedly the case, I have taken that into account in adopting my SP and I do not count it twice.
14. The aggravating features which do lead me to increase your minimum term are the following;
 - (i) The background to this offending was your involvement in commercial level dealings in illicit drug;
 - (ii) This was a meticulously planned and executed attack, involving the use and disposal of numerous mobile phones and multiple vehicles; hostile reconnaissance; a dress rehearsal; the use of a tracker, replacement of number plates, and changing of the appearance of the Vauxhall Combo van,
 - (iii) It was an attack by three heavily armed men on a single victim in his own home;
 - (iv) You went to great lengths to remove or destroy evidence that might have led to your arrest. In that regard, I note the efforts to clean up No 17 after the killing and to leave no forensic trace of your presence; the CCTV hard drive, smoke alarm and video doorbell were taken when you left; you

disposed of the tracker and the phone used to operate it in the canal, you disposed of the Ford Caddy van; you attempted to dispose of the sawn off shot gun and the deceased's driving license both of which I conclude you had taken from his home;

(v) After the murder, you attempted to flee the country and escape to South America. Whilst I accept you might have feared for your own safety, I find that the principal motivation in going to Ireland, Holland, Spain and finally Suriname was to escape justice; and

(vi) You interfered with the trial of your co-conspirators at Bolton Crown Court in 2023 by inventing evidence and coaching them as to how they answered questions. You did so not only with a view to helping them to escape justice but also in an attempt to avoid it yourself.

15. I also take into account the mitigation advanced on your behalf. In particular I note:

- First and most importantly, unlike some of your co-conspirators, notably Mr Reece, you have no previous convictions for offences of violence. Unlike Mr Steven, you were not on license when you committed these offences.
- Second, you have a daughter in whose upbringing you have, before your flight abroad, been closely involved;
- Third, I accept that you endured appalling conditions whilst in Suriname;
- Fourth, I have read and considered the Psychiatric report of Dr Sodi Mann. I accept that you now suffer from PTSD as a result of your treatment in Suriname.

16. I do not accept that a lack of intention to kill should be treated as a mitigating feature.

I conclude that the tourniquet on the arm was applied to keep Mr Campbell alive so that you could cause him further pain, not with a view to saving his life. I reject any suggestion that it was you or one of your gang who dialled 999. Two of you had left the house when the call was made and it seems to me vanishingly unlikely that the third stopped to call the police. I find that in fact dialling 999 was the last act of Mr Campbell. You may not have intended to kill Mr Campbell from the beginning but, given the severity of the beating, kicking, stabbing, scalding and throttling which the three of you inflicted on him, I have no doubt that by the time you left him bleeding, alone on the floor of his hallway, you intended that he should die.

17. The sentence for conspiracy to rob will be served concurrently with your life sentence for murder. Applying the Guidelines for Robbery in a dwelling this would have been a high culpability case given the use of weapons, including knives. It was a sophisticated and organised conspiracy in which you played a leading role. The harm caused, prior to death was high, category 1. The balance of the aggravating and mitigating features to which I have already referred leads to a final sentence of 16 years for the conspiracy which you will serve concurrently to the life sentence. I take into account the additional criminality involved in the conspiracy to rob in setting the minimum term for murder.
18. In those circumstances, the minimum term I impose is one of 37 years. From that I will deduct the time you have spent in custody in the UK, namely 353 days. I accept your counsel's submissions that I should exercise my discretion also to deduct the time spent in custody in Suriname, a further 481 days. That totals 834 days or 2 years and 104 days producing a final figure of 34 years and 261 days.
19. Stand up.
20. John Belfield for the offence of murder I impose a sentence of life imprisonment. Like Mr Steven, you will serve a minimum of 34 years and 261 days before you are eligible for parole. Upon your release you will be subject to licence and possible recall for the rest of your life. On Count 1, Conspiracy to Rob, I sentence you to a concurrent sentence of 16 years. Take him down.
21. Before I part with this case I want to commend two officers from the prosecution team.
22. First and foremost Investigative Support Officer Mark Safranauskas for his exceptional work on the CCTV, preparation of presentational materials for the jury and his presentation of the Timeline during the trial. And Detective Sergeant Paul Davies the Officer in the Case. While very many police officers and civilian staff from Greater Manchester Police contributed to this complex investigation, the above two have stood out - for their commitment, diligence, conscientiousness and fair-mindedness.