

# Woman sentenced to life in cocaine ring case

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The third defendant in a Southfield-based drug ring that supplied more than 1,700 pounds of cocaine to Flint was sentenced to life in prison Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Flint.

Senior U.S. District Judge Stewart A. Newblatt sentenced Michelle West, 33, of Detroit to life in prison for conspiracy to distribute cocaine and drug-related murder charges.

"I'm innocent of the charges today," West told Newblatt as she broke down and cried. "I was innocent of the charges May 3 (1993), and I will be innocent of these charges until the day I die."

As U.S. marshals led West from the court room, she cried and told her mother she loved her. Federal sentences have no parole.

Newblatt also sentenced West to 30 years in prison for making false state-

ments to a financial institution insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and 20 years for money laundering.

She was the second of three defendants in the drug ring to receive a life sentence.

Olee Wozzo Robinson, 41, of Southfield, the kingpin, previously was sentenced to life for drug-related murder and running a continuing criminal enterprise. He also received sentences ranging from 2 to 20 years for seven other counts.

The drug-related murder charge can carry the death penalty, although the government did not seek it against the trio.

A federal jury found West and Robinson guilty in December. A third defendant, Cynthia Horry-Hunter, 29, of Southfield, was acquitted of the drug-related murder and conspiracy charges. She was found guilty of one count of wire fraud. Newblatt sentenced her to 14 months in prison.

Based on testimony, Newblatt found West responsible for distributing more than 500 kilograms of cocaine. Federal of-

ficials have said Robinson's ring supplied more than 1,700 pounds of cocaine — with a street value of more than \$24 million — to the Flint area since 1989.

Witnesses testified Robinson's organization created shell companies, bogus identifications and financial documents to provide drug dealers with the credit histories necessary to buy cars and houses.

FBI agents captured West and Robinson on tape talking with a key witness about cocaine, violence and the drug-related murder.

The witness also testified the three defendants either directed or helped set up the slaying of Sherman A. Christian, 33, on the Southfield Freeway in Allen Park on June, 23, 1989. The witness was one of the trigger men and received immunity for his testimony.

As he did during the trial, David I. Goldstein, West's attorney, argued the testimony of the government's witnesses — both admitted drug dealers — was filled

with holes.

They told different stories to the grand jury and at the trial, he said. They contradicted each other, and they were housed together for more than 30 days before they testified.

"What we have here is the unsubstantiated testimony of two government informants who contradicted themselves and contradicted each other," Goldstein said. "These two guys are lying at some point. They have to (be)."

West said agents raided her cell at the Shiawassee County Jail without notifying her attorney. She said she was taken away while they looked through all of her documents including those that would have helped in her defense. The government amended one charge after the raid.

At the trial, defense lawyers said agents who raided the defendants' homes and offices never found drugs, paraphernalia or large amounts of money.