

# Media Statement



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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**DATE: 14 NOVEMBER 2018**

**RE: CROWDS CHEER AS BRUTAL CRIMINALS ARE HANDED HEAVY SENTENCES**

Relatives and community members stood on their feet and cheered loudly as Vernon Witbooi, Geraldo Parsons, Eben van Niekerk and Nashville Julius were handed heavy sentences by the Western Cape High Court on Monday.

Witbooi, Parsons and Van Niekerk were each convicted of ten counts which include four counts of robbery with aggravating circumstances, three counts of kidnapping, attempted murder, rape and murder. Their co-accused, Julius, was convicted of two counts of robbery with aggravating circumstance and two counts of kidnapping.

The loud cheers and clapping erupted as Judge Rosheni Allie sentenced the 33 year-old Witbooi to two life terms and 115 years direct imprisonment. Parsons, 28, was also sentenced to two life terms and 115 years direct imprisonment while their co –accused Van Niekerk, 28, got his two life terms and 128 years direct imprisonment. Julius, 29, got off lighter as he was effectively sentenced to 22 years direct imprisonment.

These career criminals committed one of the most gruesome crimes which shook the Western Cape, South Africa and the world at large. All four of them have previous convictions which include theft, housebreaking, possession of drugs and attempting to escape from custody.

The crime that shocked many to the core started on the evening of 26 May 2017 after the four drug addicts decided to walk into the Stellenbosch CBD to “see what they could find”. They found two University of Stellenbosch students, Cheslin Claud Marsh and Hannah Cornelius, who were sitting in a blue and white Citi Golf outside the Lavanda Flats which was a student residency of Marsh.

They threatened them with knives, robbed Marsh of his jacket, cell phone, earrings and the meagre amount of money he had in his wallet. They forced him to give them his pin number before pushing him into the boot of the vehicle. They robbed Cornelius of her cell phone, wallet and her vehicle. They drove around with them in the vehicle. They took her inside a shack belonging to 'Kaffertjie' in Kraaifontein who gave them a tik lolly. When Cornelius asked them what was going to happen and begged them not to take her car as it belonged to her grandmother, they lied and told them that they would drive themselves home and hand the car over to the two students. They had other plans.

They drove into the bushes, ordered Marsh out of the vehicle, and walked him to a tree with bricks next to it. They ordered him to place his head on the bricks. Two of the accused who walked him had bricks in their hands. He closed his eyes and started praying. He lost consciousness. They left him for dead. He regained his consciousness the next morning and ran to the closest house to ask for help. He was chased away and police were called. He explained to the police what happened and he was taken to hospital where he was found to have a broken arm, had a fractured skull, had brain injuries and he has lost hearing in his left ear for good. Doctors say he is lucky to be alive.

Cornelius was not as fortunate. The criminals took her to a bushy area in one of the farms in Stellenbosch where they brutally raped her using condoms to hide their DNA. She was then stabbed twice in the neck which led to a loss of blood. They then hit her head twice with a 37, 5 kg rock that was found next to her body. She suffered serious injuries to her skull, skull base and the brain.

A day after committing these gruesome crimes, the accused were not done. They robbed Ncumisa Qwina of her cell phone, bag, bank cards, clothing cards, and jewellery. Later that day, they robbed Miemie Oktober as she walked from a shopping mall to a taxi rank. They forced her into the hijacked blue and white Citi Golf. They robbed her of her jewellery, wallet, bankcards and cell phones. They forced her to give them her pin number and withdrew money from her bank account.

Advocate Lenro Badenhorst argued for very strong sentences against the accused. For the rape and murder of Hannah Cornelius he asked the court to impose life imprisonment.

"The accused didn't show remorse and didn't assist the police to find "Kaffertjie". The accused demonstrated vengefulness because Marsh was told before he was beaten in the bush that he is being punished for having given an incorrect bank pin number. Marsh

and the deceased were threatened with death if the deceased didn't give the accused the keys to her car. "Cheslin suffered irreparable harm and there is no reparation possible for the murder of the deceased," he said

The NPA welcomes the sentence as the charges against these accused are very serious.

Kind Regards,

**Eric Ntabazalila**

**Regional Spokesperson: DPP Western Cape**

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