

VICTORIA MARTINEZ PLEADED NO CONTEST TO FIRST-DEGREE MURDER FOR FATALLY SHOOTING CURTIS WILLIAMS IN OAKLAND

An Alameda woman pleaded no contest this week to first-degree murder for fatally shooting a man during an argument inside his RV in Oakland's Meadow Brook neighborhood two years ago. Victoria Martinez, 23, entered her plea on Tuesday for the death of 44-year-old Curtis Williams, which occurred in the 2400 block of 24th Avenue in the early morning hours of July 5, 2012. Prosecutor Tom Wagstaffe said today that Martinez decided to kill Williams and waited for him outside his RV the night of July 4, 2012.

When Williams returned home after midnight, Martinez tied him up, shot him and beat him in the head with a hard object, Wagstaffe said. Williams' body wasn't found until about 11 p.m. on July 6, 2012. Martinez's lawyer, Thomas Worthington, said if the case had gone to trial he would have argued that Martinez suffered from intimate partner battering at the hands of Williams, with whom she used methamphetamines, and that she should be convicted of the lesser charge of manslaughter, not murder.

But Worthington said he recommended that Martinez plead no contest to first-degree murder in exchange for prosecutors' agreeing to dismiss a firearm use enhancement because it reduced her possible sentence. He said Martinez, whose trial had been scheduled to begin later this month, could have faced 50 years to life in state prison if she'd been convicted of first-degree murder and the firearm use clause. She'll now face the lesser term of 25 years to life in state prison when she's sentenced by Alameda County Superior Court Judge Paul Delucchi on March 13.

"It was very hard to recommend that she enter the plea," Worthington said. He said that Williams "introduced her (Martinez) to methamphetamines" and "her judgment was badly impaired" after she became addicted to the drug. Worthington said Martinez had been molested as a child, had a short and unhappy marriage when she was a teenager and then became "completely exhausted" by taking care of her mother, an invalid, at her family's home in Alameda.

The defense attorney said Martinez initially had a consensual sexual relationship with Williams but later became unhappy with him after he became more demanding and forced her into non-consensual sex. Worthington said if the case had gone to trial he would have argued that Martinez acted in imperfect self-defense because there was ongoing "trauma" in her relationship with Williams and she shot him in an honest if unreasonable belief that she was in danger of suffering serious bodily harm. Wagstaffe said Superior Court Judge Kenneth Burr recently made a key ruling that incriminating statements that Martinez made after the fatal shooting could be admitted at her trial. Worthington admitted that Martinez had confessed to police and had told people shortly before the shooting that she would kill Williams.

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