

NEWS RELEASE

Spencer B. Merriweather III
District Attorney

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Man sentenced to life in prison for fatal UNC Charlotte shooting

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Defendant Trystan Terrell will spend the rest of his life in prison for murdering two students and injuring four others when he opened fire on a classroom at UNC Charlotte, shooting indiscriminately in an attack he had been planning for months. He entered a guilty plea today in courtroom 5310 before The Honorable W. Robert Bell, Superior Court Judge. The case was prosecuted by the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Homicide Team.

The defendant, 23, pled guilty to 1) two counts of first-degree murder, 2) four counts of attempted first-degree murder, and 3) discharging a firearm on educational property. Judge Bell sentenced him to two consecutive sentences of *life in prison without the possibility of parole*, as well as an additional 157-201 months in prison.

On April 30, 2019, students were giving a presentation in an anthropology class in room 236 of the Kennedy Building at UNC Charlotte when the defendant burst into the room with a pistol and began firing at students seated at nearby tables. The room erupted in chaos as students began to flee.

Ellis Reed Parlier, 19, was likely the first victim struck by the gunfire. He was shot multiple times.

During the attack, 21-year-old Riley Howell charged the defendant, knocking the defendant off his feet and onto the floor. Mr. Howell suffered multiple gunshot wounds, including one at close range. Mr. Howell's actions ended the shooting and ultimately saved other classmates' lives.

After he was tackled by Mr. Howell, the defendant remained lying on the floor, which is where the first responding officer, a sergeant with the UNC Charlotte Police Department, found him. Initially believing the defendant was a victim, the sergeant asked, "Who were the shooters here?"

"I was," the defendant replied.

The sergeant and another student who had arrived to help then handcuffed the defendant and began rendering aid to the victims.

Mr. Parlier and Mr. Howell were pronounced deceased on scene. Four additional students, Rami Alramadhan, Sean DeHart, Emily Houpt and Drew Pescaro, were transported to local hospitals, where they were treated for gunshot wounds. All four survived.

At the scene, police discovered the defendant's pistol, an empty 17-round magazine, as well as 17 additional magazines that were each fully loaded with 17 live bullets.

The defendant gave a full confession to police. At the beginning of the semester, he had been a student in this anthropology class. He had attended a few weeks of class but then withdrew entirely from the university. The defendant told police he became interested in mass shootings and began planning an attack around August 2018. He bought a gun and began practicing at a shooting range. He told no one about his plans.

The following is a statement from District Attorney Spencer B. Merriweather III:

“Today’s sentence brings to justice the man responsible for taking the lives of Reed and Riley and for inflicting unspeakable harm upon their families, the surviving victims, and the entire UNC Charlotte community. No court proceeding can ever provide true closure to those who have suffered this kind of trauma. But the sentence handed down today does acknowledge the gravity and magnitude of the loss experienced by these families, by those on campus, and by people all across this county. It ensures the man who committed these horrible crimes will never harm anyone again, it places the complete focus of our attention back on those who we have lost, and it allows our community to begin the slow and difficult process of healing and finding peace.”

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