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Man sentenced to at least 7 years in Yonkers slaying

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A distraught mother who lost her only child in a drive-by shooting last year lashed out at the killer today before he was sent to prison for at least seven years in connection with the killing.

"Anthony Burton, you are nothing but a menace and a hazard to society and you should not be allowed to walk the streets of Yonkers or anywhere for a long time," Gisela Marin told the defendant at his sentencing in Westchester County Court.

Burton was convicted of manslaughter in July but acquitted of murder for the fatal shooting of Jessica Santos on Aug. 27, 2006.

That night, he fired six shots from a moving car as it passed a crowd of people in front of a Beech Street grocery store. Santos was hit by one of the bullets and was pronounced dead a short time later at St. Joseph's Hospital.

The 19-year-old Tarrytown resident was there saying goodbye to friends before leaving the next morning for her sophomore year at the University of New Haven. She had been studying criminal justice and hoped to become an FBI agent. The college dedicated a classroom to Santos.

Yesterday, her mother spoke for more than 20 minutes - of the spontaneous songs and dances she would share with her daughter; her daughter's ambition in dancing, swimming and everything else she put her mind to; and the devastating moments when she learned Jessica was dead.

"My world came to a sudden halt," she said. "At that very moment, I felt like there was no air to breathe and that my very being, my very soul, left my body. I wanted to die rather than to face living without my only child."

Burton sat with his head on the defense table, lifting it only when Marin told him to "Listen up" as she addressed him directly. Later, he declined to speak when given the chance.

Acting state Supreme Court Justice Robert Neary sentenced Burton to the maximum five to 15 years for the manslaughter and the maximum seven years for the gun possession. The sentence will not begin until Burton completes a 4-year prison term for selling drugs to an undercover officer near the Enrico Fermi School in Yonkers a month before he killed Santos.
