

# *Parole Board Is Divided on Cyntoia Brown, Trafficking Victim Serving Life Sentence for Murder*

By **Christine Hauser**

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A Tennessee parole board was divided on Wednesday on its recommendations for clemency for Cyntoia Brown, a Nashville woman serving a life sentence for killing a man who hired her for sex while she was being trafficked as a teenager.

Two of the six board members recommended commuting her sentence to time served, while two voted to recommend making her eligible for parole after serving 25 years, which would mean in 2029, Melissa McDonald, a spokeswoman for the board, said.

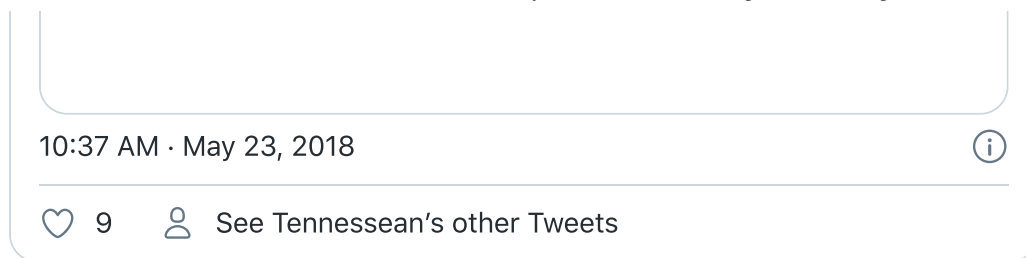
Two voted to recommend denying clemency to Ms. Brown, 30, who is serving a life sentence for fatally shooting Johnny Allen, 43, in 2004.

Ms. McDonald said Ms. Brown spoke several times during the hearing. Charles W, Bone, who represented her, declined to comment.

The range of recommendations from the state's Board of Parole will go to Gov. Bill Haslam, who will decide how to proceed. Mr. Haslam, a Republican, is in his final year in office and has not yet granted any clemency petitions.

The hearing, which was not broadcast live, lasted for about three hours. Ms. Brown and other speakers addressed the board, which is appointed by the governor.





When she was 16, Ms. Brown, who had run away from her adoptive family, lived in a motel with a pimp known as “Cut Throat,” who raped and abused her while forcing her to become a prostitute, according to a court document.

In August 2004, Mr. Allen met her at a fast-food restaurant in Nashville and bought her something to eat. He then drove her to his home, and they got into bed, the document says. Ms. Brown said she saw him reaching under his bed and thought he was getting a gun. She shot him, took money and two guns, and fled, it says.

In 2006, she was tried as an adult. A jury rejected her claim of self-defense, finding her guilty of first-degree murder and aggravated robbery.

State sentencing laws say Ms. Brown will not be eligible for parole until she has served 51 years in prison.

Ms. Brown’s supporters have described her as a model inmate who helped other inmates and earned an associate degree by taking classes from Lipscomb University, a private Christian college in Nashville.

Her case has attracted the public support of celebrities including Rihanna, LeBron James, Snoop Dogg and Kim Kardashian West.

But Jeff Burks, who prosecuted Ms. Brown and is now an assistant district attorney in Madison, Ga., said earlier this month when the hearing was granted that Ms. Brown shouldn’t be considered a victim of trafficking, and that she tried to recruit someone to return to Mr. Allen’s apartment after killing him to steal from it.

“What should the law be as to a 16-year-old who does this? I don’t weigh in on that,” he said. “But the facts of the case, I have a strong position on.”

An appeals court has agreed to hear oral arguments in her case on June 14.