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## News

### Retired cop gets 35 years in child sex assault

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A decorated, retired Philadelphia police officer and martial arts instructor - found guilty of sexually assaulting a female student for six years start when she was 12 - was sentenced to 17 1/2 to 35 years this morning by a Philadelphia judge.

Tyrone Wiggins, 51, said nothing before the sentence was imposed by the Common Pleas Court Judge Sandy Byrd. Byrd also sentenced Wiggins to pay a \$10,000 fine and make \$5,000 restitution to the victim.

"This was a case of child abuse carried out against a victim by an assailant she trusted, someone she saw as a mentor," Byrd said.

Wiggins, who retired in November 2009 after 23 years with the police department just one day before his arrest, was found guilty by a Common Pleas Court jury in December of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, statutory sexual assault, and corrupting a minor.

Defense attorney Scott P. Sigman urged Byrd to sentence Wiggins to no more than the mandatory minimum five years, citing Wiggins' service as a Marine, a law enforcement career in which Wiggins garnered awards for valor, was shot making an arrest, and taught karate to thousands of children and adults as an eighth-degree black belt sensei at his own school.

But a Philadelphia jury believe the victim, now a 26-year-old Philadelphia police officer, and convicted Wiggins of sexually assaulting her for six years, starting when she was 12.

The jury acquitted Wiggins of rape because the charge was what the prosecutor called age-specific: the jury would have had to find that he had vaginal intercourse with the victim before she was 13.

The victim made a brief impact statement in which she said, "My whole childhood was take away from me before it even began. . . . You knew I was a vulnerable child with nowhere to run and no one to turn to and you took advantage of me."

With no DNA or other forensic evidence, the jury had to weigh the credibility of Wiggins, a polished and poised man with a commanding presence, and the victim, a soft-spoken woman who barely looked at her former mentor without breaking down.

Assistant District Attorney Mark Cipolletti said Wiggins targeted her when she was 10 and her parents had enrolled her and her brother in his karate class at the Olney Recreation Center.

Cipoletti said Wiggins began a two-year "grooming process" during which Wiggins insinuated himself into her family and became a self-described "godfather" to the girl and her brother.

Several days after showing her a pornographic video at his house, the victim testified, Wiggins drove her in his van to Fairmount Park. There, she said, Wiggins exposed himself and had her perform a sex act on him. Within a year, she said, they had begun intercourse.

"He told me I was his girlfriend and he was in love with me," she said. "He told others I was his daughter."

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