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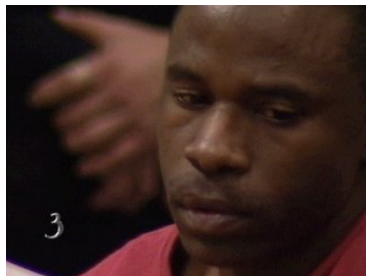
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### Man to Change Plea in Murder Case



Burlington, Vermont - July 16, 2007

Gerald Montgomery will be in court on Friday to formally change his plea and receive his sentence.

There is a gag order in place until then, so no one involved in the deal is talking on the record. But sources tell Channel 3 he'll serve 43 years to life for the crime.

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Montgomery avoids a sentence of life without parole. Laura Winterbottom's family avoids the trauma of a trial.

Montgomery will be back in court on Friday for the final chapter in the state's homicide case against him.

He is accused of kidnapping Laura Winterbottom in downtown Burlington on March 9, 2005, after she left a Church Street bar.

Her body was found in her car in the Old North End. She had been raped and

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strangled -- a random crime that stunned the Burlington community.

Gerald Montgomery was arrested two weeks later, charged with first-degree murder and sexual assault.

Montgomery was initially found incompetent to stand trial, but after months of psychiatric care doctors determined that he was mentally fit. Trial was expected to begin this summer.

Under an apparent plea deal, he'll serve 43 years to life in prison -- avoiding the sentence of life without parole he could have received had a jury found him guilty of first-degree murder.

Sources tell Channel 3 the deal has been in the works for months. It had been on hold pending the completion of DNA testing. DNA from the crime scene and on the victim had to be matched to DNA taken from Montgomery.

Sources say Laura Winterbottom's family has approved of the deal, saving themselves the trauma of reliving the case during a trial.

[Kate Duffy](#) - WCAX News



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