



Michelle Carter receives 15 months in jail; will remain free pending appeal

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By [Jan Ransom](#) and [Travis Andersen](#)

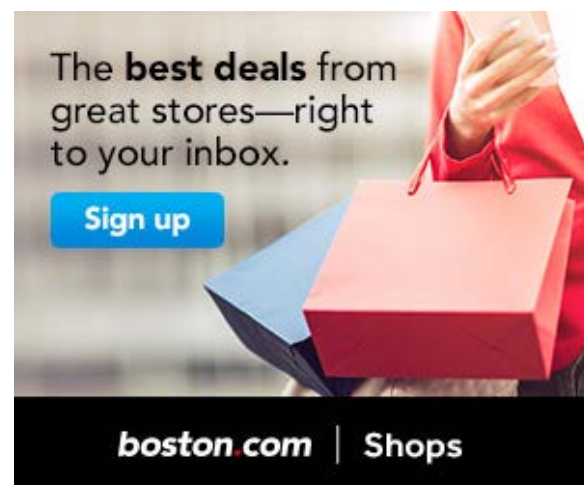
GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 03, 2017

TAUNTON — Michelle Carter was sentenced Thursday to 15 months in jail for pressuring 18-year-old Conrad Roy III into taking his own life, but she was allowed to remain free during the appeal of her conviction in the suicide-by-text case.

In a tense, emotional scene, Judge Lawrence Moniz sentenced Carter, 20, to serve time behind bars, despite her lawyer's plea for probation. But the judge stayed Carter's sentence until the appeal of her involuntary manslaughter conviction is resolved.

"This court must . . . balance between rehabilitation, the promise that rehabilitation would work, and a punishment for the actions that have occurred," Moniz said.

Prosecutors sought a sentence of seven to 12 years. Roy's relatives expressed shock at the verdict and some left the courtroom in tears.

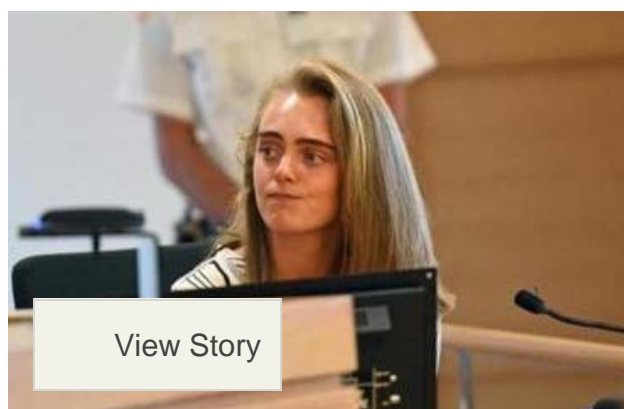


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The controversial case, which drew national attention, focused on the text [messages](#) Carter sent Roy in the days and moments before his death in July 2014, urging him to kill himself by any means.



‘When are you doing it?’

Read the Carter case texts

Text messages released in the case show Michelle Carter becoming increasingly aggressive in pressuring Conrad Roy III to commit suicide.

Michelle Carter found guilty in texting suicide case

Kevin Cullen: Three little words sunk Michelle Carter

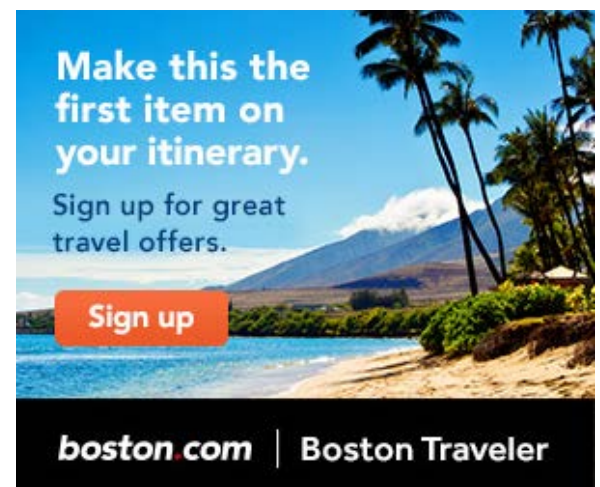
From 30 miles away, Carter had ordered him back into a truck that was filling fast with carbon monoxide in a Fairhaven parking lot. Then she listened on her phone as he choked to death on the fumes.

Moniz said he did not believe Carter's young age at the time of the offense, or her own mental health issues, contributed to her crime.

"I am satisfied that she is mindful of the actions for which she now stands convicted," Moniz said.

The sentence was the latest turn in a wrenching legal saga involving two deeply troubled teenagers whose conflicted relationship was carried out almost entirely online, raising difficult questions of criminal responsibility.

[In June, Carter was convicted](#) of involuntary manslaughter in the case, which focused on whether words should make someone criminally responsible for another person's actions. She was 17 when she urged Roy, of Mattapoisett, in a series of bizarre, chilling messages and phone conversations, to end his life, even after he told her he was too scared to go through with it.



In a series of victim impact statements, Roy's relatives fought back tears as they described the depth of their loss.

"I cannot begin to describe the despair I feel over the loss of my son," said Roy's father, Conrad Roy Jr. "I am heartbroken."

He said Carter, who appeared distraught as she listened from the defense table, "exploited my son's weaknesses" and had not shown any remorse.

"How could Michelle Carter behave so viciously and encourage my son to end his life?" he asked. "Where was her humanity? In what world was this behavior OK and acceptable?"

Roy's sister, Camdyn, said she will forever be haunted by her brother's death.

"Not a day goes by without him being my first thought waking up, and my last thought going to bed," she said. "I know that he loved me more than any big brother ever could."

Prosecutors also read a statement from Roy's mother, Lynn, who wrote that Carter inflicted "so much pain on myself, his dad, his sisters, and all who loved him deeply."

Bristol County prosecutor Maryclare Flynn wanted a much stiffer sentence.

Carter "ended [Roy's] life to better her own," by garnering sympathy as a grieving girlfriend, she said.

Carter's lawyer, Joseph P. Cataldo, asked that she be sentenced to five years of supervised probation with counseling. He noted that his client has a lengthy history of mental health issues, including depression and eating disorders.

"Miss Carter has to live with the consequences of this for the rest of her life," Cataldo said.

The defense will appeal the verdict on the grounds that "Massachusetts does not have an assisted suicide or encouragement of suicide law in place and it's violative of the first amendment," Cataldo said.

"It's a tragedy," he said. "It is not, however, a crime."

The case sparked debate among legal specialists, who noted there is nothing under Massachusetts

law that explicitly forbids someone from encouraging someone else to commit suicide. Cataldo had argued Roy was troubled and intent on committing suicide and had tried multiple times.

Her appeal is likely to take years before it is settled, legal specialists said.

“It’s not that anyone is dragging their feet, but these things take time, and it’s important — everyone wants to make sure they get it right,” said Suffolk University law professor Rosanna Cavallaro.

Experts said the judge’s reasoning for staying Carter’s sentence was likely influenced by the length of the sentence he imposed.

“The judge was afraid that by the time the case went through the appeals process, she would have already served her sentence,” said Peter Elikann, former chair of the Massachusetts Bar Association’s Criminal Justice Section. “If she were to win her appeal, she might have already served all of her time in jail.”

The judge’s order prohibited Carter from profiting from the trial or the crime.

The Roy family and prosecutors expressed disappointment.

“If it was a 2½-year sentence in cuffs today, it might have made us feel better,” said Jimmy Brodeur, Roy’s aunt’s fiance. “For the family it hasn’t ended. We thought maybe there would be some kind of closure today, but it’s just going to get dragged on and dragged on.”

Prosecutors also voiced dismay over the sentence.

Carter “undertook a systematic campaign of coercion and targeted an equivocating young man’s insecurities and fears and acted to subvert his willpower in favor of her own,” Flynn said after the sentencing.

Carter was shockingly blunt as she implored Roy to end his life, writing to him in one text exchange days before his suicide: “I still don’t think you want to do this so you’ll have to prove me wrong . . . hang yourself, jump off a building, stab yourself. I don’t know. There’s lots of ways.”

In a Facebook message Carter wrote shortly after Roy’s death, she described Roy as “the bright light and love of my life, my hero, my best friend, the most genuine and perfect boyfriend any girl could

ask for.”

No one “will ever understand our love story,” she said. But she knew “how it was supposed to end, he did too.”

“We were endgame,” she wrote.

Michelle Carter found guilty in texting suicide case



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Michelle Carter receives 15 months in jail; will remain free pending appeal

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