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Sex offender charged with Cherry Hill murder, rape

By a Sun reporter

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Baltimore police have charged a 38-year-old registered sex offender with first-degree murder and rape in the February 2000 strangulation of a 19-year-old woman inside her Cherry Hill home, according to court charging documents.

Rodney Elmore Joseph, of the 400 block of Oak St. in Catonsville, was charged with killing Chontrell Sample, who lived in the 2300 block of Round Road, after police said they matched a DNA sample taken from the victim to samples in a database of sex offenders.

Joseph had been convicted of rape in January 2004 and sentenced to 20 years in prison, with all but 15 years suspended. After his release -- his sentence began in July 2003, when he was first jailed -- he was placed on the state's sex offender registry and was convicted in January of this year of failing to notify officials that he had changed his address. He was sentenced to five months and 10 days in prison.

According to court documents filed this week, Maryland State Police notified city police in February 2007 that the DNA sample taken from the victim at the time of her slaying matched that of Joseph. There was no immediate explanation of why it took police another year to file charges in the case.

Sample was found dead about 5:40 p.m. on Feb. 12, 2000, by a city police officer who reported that the apartment had been locked and secured. He found the partially clothed victim lying on her back in her bedroom, her hands tied behind her back.

Joseph is being held without bail in the Baltimore City Detention Center.

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