It's already better," said Vanessa Gay, as she smiled and looked back at the home's remnants. She calls herself "a survivor of Sowell," and does not shy away from talking about her experiences, she stated, "We are stronger than we know."

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

CLEVELAND – Another chapter has closed in the life of convicted serial killer Anthony Sowell. The demolition of the house where 11 women lost there lives, and a few who escaped, brings both solace and sadness.

Around 6:30 a.m., crews with demolition equipment started gathering at Sowell's 12205 Imperial Ave. home on Cleveland's east side. The area was guarded by police, who prevented anyone from coming close to the

infamous abode.

A few of the family members of the victims came to see it for themselves. They had received hand delivered letters about the demolition plans on Monday. Shortly after 7 a.m., a backhoe was used to tear the second-story porch off the house.

A key witness for the prosecution, Vanessa Gay, was also there to watch the house come down. Gay told jurors that she was attacked and raped by Sowell, and that she even saw a headless body inside his house.

"It took me back to that room, back to that day," Gay said as she wiped away tears while talking to reporters. "It's a start, it's a start," said one of the few women to escape this madman. "This is my life. This is something I live with everyday. No sleep from it. But it gets better. It going to continue getting better. Not going to dwell on it. I'm going to turn a negative into a positive."

"I am glad to see the house come down, but I would not like to see a memorial in this spot. My mother does not live here, I would prefer to see something at Luke Easter Park," said Donnita Carmichael, the daughter of murder victim Tonia Carmichael.

The bill for the demolition is in the area of about $20,000 dollars, but the City of Cleveland is making sure it is done in one day.
In early September, the home was served with a condemnation notice. The notice listed four parties responsible for upkeep of the home. One of the parties was the estate of Segerna Sowell, the deceased stepmother of Anthony Sowell.

Consent to conduct an inspection of the property was given, and on Aug. 30, 2011, according to Mayor Jackson's Office, an inspection staff from the departments of Building and Housing and Public Health went to the property. Inspectors spanned the exterior and interior of the property, finding a total of 22 violations, 10 interior and 12 exterior.

According to the condemnation notice, the structure was deemed, "A menace to public health, safety and welfare. It is unsanitary and declared an unsafe structure and a public nuisance."

The Department of Building and Housing also said that the home was infested with roaches, fleas, termites and rodents.

The property owner, who according to court testimony is the mother of Sowell's stepmother, will foot the demolition bill. If the bill goes unpaid, the city could eventually take ownership of the property.

Prosecutors said Sowell lured the women to his house with drugs and alcohol. Their remains were found in shallow graves in the backyard, buried in the basement and even hidden in a crawlspace. Representatives from the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office testified that many of women were partially clothed, and had ligatures around their necks and wrists.

This summer, after more than 60 witnesses and 12 hours of interrogation video, a Cuyahoga County jury convicted the former Marine on 82 of 83 counts, including aggravated murder, kidnapping and abuse of a corpse. That same jury recommended Sowell be sentenced to death.

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