

Young black woman kidnapped and tortured in West Virginia hate crime

By Sari Schutrump-Boward

Six white kidnapers held a young black woman captive for a week in a trailer in Logan County, West Virginia. She was repeatedly raped, tortured, and forced to eat rat, dog, and human feces.

According to victim Megan Williams, 20, her kidnapers choked her with a cable cord, stabbed her with a butcher knife, wooden sticks, and fly swatters, poured hot wax on her, and called her a racial slur. They also forced her to drink from the toilet, drink the kidnapper's urine, lick up blood, and ripped her hair out.

According to CNN, Megan's mother, Carmen Williams, did not report Megan missing, since her daughter disappears for weeks at a time.

"I am surprised in this day and age it could happen with no one noticing," said Helen Rice, director of student health.

Williams was discovered when an anonymous tip was given to the Logan County's Sheriffs department on Sept. 8. The witness went to the kidnapper, Frankie Brewster's trailer and saw the victim.

"Frankie was sitting on her front porch with her doors open. We asked Frankie who else was at the residence and she stated no one else was here, that she was alone," said the unnamed witness to The Charleston Gazette. "As she was talking, she got up and stepped toward her door when a female inside the residence limped toward the door with her arms out, saying, 'help me.'"

According to The Charleston Gazette, the witness saw Williams' four stab wounds in

her left leg and her eyes bruised.

"There is no humanity in the way she was treated," said Holly Wilson, coordinator of Africana community programs.

The FBI is looking at this case as a possible civil rights violation and hate crime.

According to ABC News, Williams' statement said she was raped at knifepoint by Danny Combs, in the trailer's bathroom, tied with a cable cord and choked by Karen Burton, doused with hot wax by George Messer, and stabbed by Bobby Brewster.

"An assailant cut the woman's ankle with a knife and used the N-word in telling her she was victimized because she is black," authorities said to ABC News.

According to BBC News, Williams was not a random target and had a previous relationship with Bobby Brewster. In July he was charged with domestic battery and assault after they had a dispute.

"She obviously had some sort of relationship. That is based on the fact that she was present at his residence on a prior date," said Logan County Prosecutor Brian Abraham said to FOX News. Abraham is pursuing state charges that all ready have been filed.

Often in sexual assault cases victim's names are left anonymous, but in this case Williams and Carmen Williams, agreed to have it announced to have people aware of what Williams had encountered.

"I don't understand a human being doing another human being the way they did my daughter" said Carmen Williams to ABC News. "I didn't know there were people like that out here."

William's kidnapers include Frankie Brewster, 49 and her son, Bobby R. Brewster, 24, Karen

Burton, 46, and her daughter, Alisha Burton, 27, Danny J. Combs, 20, and George A. Messer, 27.

"They are misplaced people and they took it out on this poor girl," said senior Genoa O'Brien, a former member of the Anti-Racism Team.

Logan County Magistrate Court records show the criminals have had previous arrest records from many years ago, according to ABC News.

"I have some familiarity with all of those individuals" said Brian Abraham, Logan County Prosecutor, to ABC News.

The six kidnapers have collectively gathered 108 criminal charges since 1991. Frankie Brewster had the most serious charges. Karen Burton had the most charges, 33, and her daughter has 20.

In 1994, Frankie Brewster was charged with first-degree murder for the death of 84-year old Polly T. Ferrell, but she was let off with lesser charges for manslaughter and wanton endangerment. Brewster was released from prison in 2000 after five years in prison.

"Some people hide behind others and can't deal with responsibilities," said Kathy Adams, professor of psychology. "These people are not using their conscience or they do not have what we define as a conscience."

They are all charged with sexual assault, malicious wounding, and kidnapping. Brewster is charged with giving false information during the investigation. Bobby Brewster and the Burtons are charged with commission of a felony.

"I think this was a deployable crime against this woman," Wilson said. "No one should endure what she went through for five minutes."

According to ABC News, Frankie Brewster is accused of forcing Williams to perform oral sex on her.

Each of the six captors bail is \$100,000.

ABC News reported that in a courtroom, Williams clutched a small teddy bear and wore a brace on her right hand and a bandage on her left ankle.

Carmen Williams told The Charleston Gazette that she has barely left her daughter's side and knows that it will take a long time for her Megan to recover.

"I just want my daughter to be well and recover," said Carmen Williams to ABC News. "I know the Lord can do anything."

"She is not going to forget this," Adams said. "She'll have to learn to trust others again. Her trust was destroyed. She'll have to learn how to trust people again."



Lt. Col. Chessani (MIDDLE) walks from preliminary hearings at Camp Pendleton, surrounded by his lawyers.

Marines, including a lieutenant colonel, court-martialed over Haditha incident

By Tim Cox
STAFF WRITER

On Nov. 19, 2005, a roadside bomb attack killed a U.S. Marine in Haditha, Iraq. Two U.S. Marines are now facing court-martials on charges stemming from the actions they took in response to the attack, which left 24 Iraqi civilians dead.

The Marines involved have been accused of vengefully reacting to the bomb attack by ordering five men out of a nearby car and killing them before killing 19 people in nearby homes, including women and children. Defenders of the Marines' actions say they reacted to an enemy attack lawfully and in accordance with their training.

Lance Cpl. Stephen B. Tatum has been charged with involuntary manslaughter, reckless endangerment and aggravated assault. Tatum and three other marines were originally to be charged with murder, but it was decided there was insufficient evidence for the charge.

Tatum did kill shoot and kill civilians, but he "did so because of his training and the circumstances he was placed in, not to exact revenge and commit murder," wrote Lt. Col. Paul Ware, according to the Associated Press.

"Lance Cpl. Tatum did not commit any crime, and we will take the fight to the courtroom," said Tatum's lawyers in a statement. "We will vigorously challenge the government's case, and nothing will be left undone in defense of this fine young Marine."

Lt. Col. Jeffrey R. Chessani, the highest-ranked U.S. serviceman to be court-martialed over a combat incident since the Vietnam war, has been charged with dereliction of duty and violation of a lawful order after failing to adequately investigate an incident that occurred in Haditha in 2005.

"Chessani failed to thoroughly and accurately report and investigate a combat engagement that clearly needed scrutiny," said Col. Christopher Conlin at Chessani's preliminary hearing.

Lt. Gen. James Mattis decided on the charges after "consideration of information developed from investigations by Marine, Army and Naval Criminal Investigative Service investigators, as well as evidence produced during an Article 32 investigation hearing," said the Marines in press release.

An Article 32 investigation is conducted by a commissioned officer to determine whether or not there is enough evidence for a general court martial, as opposed to a less severe disciplinary action.

"The army is trained to kill people and blow stuff up. They're not trained to be a police force, they're not trained to rebuild a regime," said Assistant Professor of Political Science Robert Duncan. "Whether they're guilty or innocent I have no idea. I don't know the facts. I don't even think the military investigators know the facts."

Charges have been dropped against two other Marines in the case. One other Marine is scheduled for an evidentiary hearing.

Lt. Gen. Mattis has yet to decide whether Staff Sgt. Frank Wuterich will face charges of manslaughter or murder. Wuterich has admitted to killing Iraqi civilians in Haditha, but the Marines have said he was responding to attacks.

"I feel it's a step in the right direction that the U.S. takes some accountability for its soldiers' actions in Iraq," said sophomore peace and conflict studies major Phil Kennedy. "I don't think that it recognizes that there's a problem systematically in the army that causes this kind of abuse. It's not something that a couple of court-martials will fix."



(TOP LEFT) Frankie Brewster, 49, Karen Burton, 46, and her daughter, Alisha Burton, 27, Bobby Brewster, 24, Danny J. Combs, 20, and George A. Messer, 27, have all been charged.