

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women



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1998 Femicide Report Women and Children Murdered in Minnesota

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women monitors information about women and children murdered in our state to educate the public about the lethality of woman abuse and child abuse. We pledge to remember the women, children, and family members and/or friends who die each year from domestic violence and the woman and children who die while being used in prostitution - a system of violence against women and children. Women used in prostitution are battered women in need of protection from abuse. We also remember the women and children who were murdered by acquaintances, strangers, or unknown perpetrators.

We challenge communities to respond to battered women and their children by providing safe shelter and advocacy services, prevention education for all elementary and secondary students, laws to protect women and children, effective enforcement of those laws, and aggressive prosecution of all domestic assault crimes and all prostitution crimes targeting perpetrators, pimps, and "johns".

In Minnesota in 1998:

At least 20 women were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, intimate partner or household/family member of the deceased woman.

At least 17 children were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was their mother's husband, boyfriend, or intimate partner, or was the parent, foster parent, guardian, babysitter, or household/family member of the child.

At least 1 woman is missing and presumed dead.

At least 1 friend was murdered.

WOMEN MURDERED:

1. Kincsem Teta, 22

Prior Lake

January 18, 1998

Kincsem Teta's frozen body was found in the trunk of a car towed during a snow emergency in Minneapolis. She had last been seen alive on December 19, 1997 when she borrowed a friend's car to go to meet her ex-fiance and father of her two-year-old child, planning to get money to buy the child Christmas presents. Kincsem was reported missing by her mother on December 29. On January 7 the police went to the Prior Lake mobile home of the mother of Dean Brooks, Kincsem's ex-fiance, where they found a handgun on the floor, many bullets on a bed and bullet holes in a window. On January 15 her friend's car was towed and three days later Teta's frozen body, wrapped in a blanket, was discovered in the trunk. Dean Brooks, 23, told people in November that Kincsem had to be "disposed of" and he also told several people that he killed her because she refused to have sex with him. Dean Brooks was charged with 2 counts of first-degree murder, but pled guilty to second-degree murder.

2. Lori Beth Lewis, 37

Arden Hills

March 14, 1998

Lori Beth Lewis died after being severely beaten, having her head shoved into a wall, then her throat was cut with a piece of glass and she bled to death. Larry Knox, Lori Beth's boyfriend, called a friend and said he had murdered his girlfriend at the Emerald Inn in Arden Hills. Law enforcement arrested Knox shortly after he left the hotel in a pickup registered to Lewis -- he gave them a key to the hotel room where they found her body. Knox pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to over 29 years in prison.

3. Kriston Sjoberg, 28

Minneapolis

March 16, 1998

Kriston Sjoberg had given her husband an ultimatum to either get help for his drinking problem or she was leaving him for good. Kriston and a friend, Ellen Bauer -- with whom she had been staying -- went to the Sjoberg's home to get Kris' belongings. When they did not return by the next day, Bauer's worried husband called police who went to the Sjoberg home. There they found the two women dead of multiple gunshot wounds. Steven Sjoberg was also dead at the scene of a self-inflicted gunshot. Police said it was a double murder-suicide.

4. Marilyn Ford, 45

St. Paul

March 27, 1998

Police discovered the bloodied and barefoot body of Marilyn Ford outside the duplex she shared with her brother. They followed a trail of blood, beginning at the front door and leading to a bedroom, where more evidence of bleeding was found. American Morris had been staying with Ford and her brother for two months. The night before her body was found, Marilyn's brother had seen them together at the apartment and left. When he returned later and asked Morris where his sister was, Morris told him she had left. Several months before she died, Ford had told her sister that if anything happened to her, Morris would be the culprit. In July, Morris was found guilty of first-degree murder in the strangulation death and was sentenced to life in prison.

5. Nicole Mosser, 18**Madelia****April 5, 1998**

Police were called to a Madelia mobile home park after a report of a fight at a residence there. They found Nicole Mosser injured and bleeding. She was taken to the hospital where she was pronounced dead of a stab wound to the neck. Victor Saldana was found hiding in a closet under a pile of clothes and was taken into custody. He told authorities that he had stabbed Nicole. Saldana was charged with first- and second-degree murder and convicted of second-degree murder.

6. Brandi Summer Survis, 20**Rochester****April 16, 1998**

Brandi Summer Survis died of a gunshot wound to the head at the apartment she shared with her boyfriend, Eric Anthony Portillo. Portillo told police that "he and Survis had argued but that they had made up. Later, while they were lying in bed, Survis got up, went to the closet and pulled out a shotgun and placed the barrel in her mouth and pulled the trigger." Police said the evidence obtained at the scene "is not consistent with the statement from Mr. Portillo." Portillo, 21, was charged with Brandi's murder. Felony murder charges were dismissed. Eric Anthony Portillo pled guilty to the gross misdemeanor or interference with a dead body.

7. Mary Elizabeth Ewing, 33**Shoreview****May 7, 1998**

Mary Elizabeth Ewing was found slain at the townhouse she shared with her mother. Police were called by a neighbor who reported a woman screaming. Mary's brother, Burton James Ewing, was arrested at the scene but gave no details. Burton Ewing was charged with Mary Elizabeth's fatal beating.

8. Nanette Henderson, 29**St. Paul****May 16, 1998**

Nanette Henderson died of internal injuries after being struck by the truck her boyfriend, Ray Louis Marshall, was driving. Police were called to the scene of a domestic dispute and Marshall told them his girlfriend, Nannette Henderson, jumped on the hood of the truck he was driving. He admitted he had slammed the brakes hard, she fell off the truck and he saw her fall, but he kept driving, striking and killing her. Marshall was charged with criminal vehicular homicide.

9. Lynn Slabaugh, 42**Owatonna****June 9, 1998**

Lynn Slabaugh's body was found in her house by firefighters called to the scene. Lynn and her husband, Charles, ran a business together and when Lynn did not report for work the morning of June 9, Charles returned home and saw flames at the house. He said he attempted to call 911 on his cell phone, could not get through, and then called his company's office, which reported the fire. Charles Slabaugh told firefighters he thought his wife was inside, and they found Lynn Slabaugh dead on the basement steps. A later autopsy determined she had died by drowning and not because of the fire. State Fire Marshall's investigation showed the fire had been deliberately set and that it had been burning for over an hour before it was reported. A month later, a fire destroyed what was left of the house and Charles Slabaugh was at the scene and injured in the fire. A previous fire three years ago at the business is now being re-examined. Charles Slabaugh was charged with second-degree murder and first-degree arson and convicted on the arson charges.

10. Debbie Swigerd, 32**Coon Rapids****June 13, 1998**

Police responded to a 911 call after a woman was heard screaming on the line before it went dead. About a minute later a man called 911 to tell the dispatcher he had shot his wife. Authorities surrounded the

home minutes later and fired tear gas through the window of the dwelling, but when they entered the house, they found a couple already dead, both from shotgun blasts. Minutes before the calls, police said the man had called a neighbor to ask him to take his son, saying, "Would you please come and get him? Don't ask any questions," and the toddler was sent to wait in the garage. Debbie Swigerd was killed by a shotgun wound to the head and Rick Swigerd's wound was self-inflicted.

11. Regina Melina, 31

St. Paul

July 4, 1998

Police responded to a 911 call about a violent domestic dispute but when they arrived, the man closed the door on them. Police then broke down the door and found a man sitting in a hallway bleeding from the head, a gun in his lap. Regina Melina's body was found in a closet. She had been shot in the head and died at the scene.

12. Pa Lor, 13

Brooklyn Park

September 20, 1998

Pa Lor met Michael Medin, 18, after he finished his shift at a Subway restaurant. She had run away from home but two days earlier had called her family to say she would be home soon. Pa went willingly with Medin and two of his buddies, Johnnie Rhodes and Shea Holt, both 17, to Hartkopf Park. Early the next morning Medin pushed Pa down and covered her mouth while Rhodes raped her. Rhodes took off, Medin stabbed and strangled Pa as Holt watched. But Pa was still alive when Medin carried her out of the park. They went to Holt's garage, got some rope and a plastic bag. Medin put the bag over Pa's head but she ripped it off. They got two more bags and tied them around her head. The two young men then stood on 4'2" Pa's arms, watching the bags move up and down as she struggled to breathe. After she stopped moving, Medin went to buy cigarettes while Holt stood guard over the body. Later that day Medin paged an acquaintance, Nickie Frank, 18. She and Stacy Koemer, 18, met up with Medin who said he had been in an argument with a girl and ended up killing her and needed help to get rid of the body. Medin wrapped the body in a blanket and loaded it into the trunk. Frank drove to a landfill in Elk River but because the gate was closed they drove into a housing development where the men dragged the body 150' from the road, took off Pa's jeans and shirt and covered her with sticks. The police received a tip from someone not connected with the crime, and within 20 hours all five suspects were arrested. Medin has been charged with first-degree murder, rape and kidnapping. Holt was charged as an adult with murder and kidnapping. Rhodes was charged as a juvenile with rape. Frank and Koerner were charged with being accomplices to a felony after the fact.

13. Cynthia Sue Haisley, 43

Rochester

October 3, 1998

Cynthia Haisley's body was found near a city park. She had died of blunt force injuries to the head sometime in the previous 24 hours. The police have said her death was a homicide and that it occurred where her body was found. No weapons were found at the scene. The case continues under investigation and law enforcement is not releasing the name(s) of any suspect(s).

14. Sheri Osborn, 41

Winnebago

October 11, 1998

Sheri Osborn was on a Good Samaritan mission when she disappeared. Sheri was going to give Robert Ryan Owen a ride home from a bar in his pick-up and then take his vehicle to her residence, but she never arrived. Although authorities conducted an extensive search of the area, they did not find her and they suspected foul play. Owen initially denied knowing Osborn but witness accounts did not support his claims. Authorities had found blood splattered on a door at Owen's house, on the ground, and on a 12-gauge shotgun in Owen's pick-up. Cosmetic products, which Osborn was known to sell, were scattered in his driveway, and two 12 gauge shotgun shells were in a nearby culvert. Three weeks later Owen pleaded

police matched the handwriting on those checks with the ones forged after her death. The checks forged in 1997 had been made out to a woman who was found with the help of an FBI task force and she implicated Sessions. Carlos Sessions has been indicted on a charge of first-degree murder and eventually sentenced to life in prison.

20. Reneese Smith, 34

Minneapolis

December 27, 1998

Reneese Smith and Terence Jerome Wilson were arguing at home on Christmas Day when he shot her in the head. She died two days later. Reneese's mother, who was visiting from Chicago, was in another room in the apartment and went to the living room when she heard a gunshot and found her daughter on the floor, bleeding from her head. Their 3-year-old daughter was in the room and said "Fish killed Mama." (Wilson went by the nickname Fish). Smith's family told police that Wilson had threatened to kill Reneese in recent weeks and that he had assaulted and threatened her many times in the past. After the shooting, Wilson told several people that he pulled out his 32-caliber pistol and shot Smith in the head. He told at least one person that he had Smith in a headlock when the gun went off, court papers say. Wilson was charged with second-degree murder in the slaying of Reneese and with the second-degree murder of her unborn child.

CHILDREN MURDERED:

1. Jaylyn Celestain, 3

Burnsville

January 16, 1998

Jaylyn Celestain was found dead in her home. Her mother, Tysann Celestain, had given Jaylyn a sleeping pill, then put a pillow over her face until she stopped kicking. Then she secured a plastic bag over the child's head. Tysann then swallowed sleeping pills and rat poison and put a plastic bag over her own head but it wasn't working and her boyfriend was due home soon. She then cut her wrist with a knife, crawled out a window and walked through the snow to a nearby garage where police found her huddled and bleeding. Her boyfriend arrived home and found Jaylyn and called 911. Tysann Celestain confessed, saying she intended to kill herself but didn't want to leave Jaylyn motherless. She pled guilty to second-degree murder.

2. Katharina Brown, 18 months

Maplewood

January 29, 1998

Just as he has done for the past year, Matthew Brown dropped his 18-month-old daughter off at the baby sitter's home. But this day Manuela Etzel became upset when the baby, Katharina Brown, awoke from her nap and wouldn't play. Etzel brought the baby to the hospital emergency room stating the baby had fallen from a day bed and appeared unconscious and could not stand up on her own. The next day Katharina was declared brain dead and from suffering a severe skull fracture and subdural hematoma. The police confronted Etzel with this information and she admitted she shook Katharina too hard and put the baby's head on the floor two times. The baby died and Manuela Etzel was convicted of second-degree murder.

3. Ayesha Collier, 22 months

Brooklyn Park

February 1, 1998

22 month-old Ayesha Collier was literally squeezed to death. She suffocated and her heart stopped. The autopsy report noted that her body displayed "a constellation of child abuse injuries," including 19 fresh fingertip marks, a lacerated liver, several circular scars consistent with cigarette burns and extensive bruises on her buttocks, thighs and lower legs. Ayesha's mother, Amea Oliver went shopping and left her boyfriend, James Scott, to watch her four children. When she returned Ayesha was dead. Amea Oliver had been attending counseling classes and parenting classes after a complaint 2 years ago and again last year that she was neglecting the children, and she has been charged with assault for allegedly injuring and

bruising Ayesha. James Scott was charged with second-degree murder for allegedly being the one who left the fingertip marks on Ayesha's chest and abdomen. He was convicted of the charges in 1999.

4. Kristian Donnel, Jr, 7 weeks Red Lake April 6, 1998

Kristian Donnel, Sr. pleaded guilty in US District Court to killing his 7-week-old son by throwing the baby into a swing. Mr. Donnel admitted that he threw the baby, Kristian Donnel, Jr. because he was frustrated, and that the baby's head hit the swing. Donnel faces up to 10 years in prison.

5. Koua Eai Hang, 11 St. Paul September 3, 1998
6. Samson Hang, 9
7. Nail Hang, 8
8. Tang Lung Hang, 7
9. A-ee Hang, 6
10. Tang Kee Hang, 5

Khoua Her, 24, called 911 saying that in her despair she had tried to commit suicide and that she had killed her children. Police and paramedics found the bodies of her six children in separate rooms in their apartment. Her had strangled each of them by wrapping strips of black cloth around their necks twice. Khoua Her had swallowed poison and tried to hang herself with an electric cord before she called police. By all accounts, Her had a troubled relationship with her husband and the children's father. They had been married in a refugee camp in Thailand and the first child was born there when Khoua was just 13. Tou Hang, the father, no longer lived at home and had not seen his children for a month. Police had been to the home about 20 times on calls of domestic disputes. Her was charged with six counts of second-degree murder. She was convicted and will not be eligible for release from prison until 2032.

11. Houston Jones, 11 months Minneapolis October 21, 1998

Police were called to a house in north Minneapolis but the paramedics were unable to revive Houston Jones, who was dead on arrival at North Memorial Hospital. A 13-year-old cousin of Houston's has been charged with the killing in Juvenile Court. The same cousin was babysitting Houston last July when he immersed him in scalding water, causing second- and third-degree burns on the baby's foot and ankle. At that time police and child protection workers warned Houston's mother not to leave him in the cousin's care again. Two of Houston's siblings have been removed from the home.

12. Jereau Carlson, 2 St. Paul October 21, 1998
13. Unborn Child Bey

See Woman #16, Amanda Carlson-Bey.

14. Cory Johnson, 5 Red Wing December 5, 1998
15. Westin Johnson, 3

See Woman #17, Lois Johnson.

16. Perla Chavez, 15 months Cokato December 14, 1998

The father of Perla Chavez, Alfonzo Chavez, 28, was charged with second- and third-degree murder in her death. On December 11, Chavez took his daughter to the Medical Clinic, where she remained in a coma until she was pronounced brain dead on December 14

17. Unborn Child Smith

Minneapolis

December 27, 1998

See Woman #20, Reneese Smith.

WOMEN MISSING AND PRESUMED DEAD:

1. Bao Lor, 28

St. Paul

September 24, 1998

Bao Lor was last seen when she and her husband, Kao Vang, left their St Paul apartment in the couple's car. They told their seven children they were going to a grocery store. Vang returned to the apartment about 1 1/2 hours later but without Lor. The next day the children returned from school to find their father dead from a self-inflicted shotgun blast. Since that time the police have been focusing on finding Bao Lor. Vang once kidnapped and raped a 15 year-old girl in the Carlos Avely Wildlife Area and police fear he may have killed his wife and dumped her body there. The search continues. One of the couple's daughters said her father repeatedly beat her mother with his fists, belts and other objects.

FRIENDS MURDERED:

1. Ellen Bauer, 28

Minneapolis

March 16, 1998

See Woman #3, Kriston Sjoberg.

1998 FEMICIDE REPORT - Women and Children Murdered- is compiled from news accounts and information provided by law enforcement agencies, county attorneys, court administrators, battered women's programs, and family members and friends of murder victims. Please contact us if you have updated or more complete information on any homicide.

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