

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women



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1994 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 1994:

At least 18 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 woman.

At least 7 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 2 women who were used in prostitution were murdered.

WOMEN MURDERED:

1. Kim Bryant, 29

Minneapolis

January 24, 1994

Police found Kim stabbed to death on the floor of her apartment. Kim's husband, Mark Phillip Bryant, 28, was arrested at the scene. Neighbors said they heard shouting and stomping from the Bryant's home so often that they started tuning it out. Kim is survived by two children, who live with Mark's brother and sister-in-law.

2. Renee Brown, 37

Winona

January 31, 1994

Renee's frozen body was found outside the home of her boyfriend, William Braatz, 35. He had ignored Renee's pleas to be let inside his home on a night when the temperature dropped to 23 degrees below zero. Renee was wearing only a flannel nightgown and no shoes. She died of hypothermia and her death was ruled "accidental." Braatz was charged with second-degree manslaughter. In July, Braatz was sentenced to six months in jail and 10 years' probation. The prosecuting attorney argued at trial that Braatz chose not to open his door when Renee arrived because he didn't want to deal with her. Renee is survived by two children, ages 9 and 5.

3. Chala Davis, 18

Minneapolis

February 23, 1994

Chala was shot to death with a small-caliber gun. She suffered shots to her head. When she was found, her one-year-old baby was beside her, but the baby was not physically harmed. Chala's 19-year-old boyfriend was arrested and charged with her death.

4. Sheila Landt, 37

Shorewood

February 28, 1994

Police were called to Sheila's home by a neighbor who reported hearing gunfire. The neighbor had called the home and spoken with a young boy who said his mother had been shot. Officers found Sheila's body inside the home beside a garage entrance. She died of gunshot wounds to the head. A young boy told officers that a white minivan was missing and that his 14-year-old brother, Jered, "needed to be talked to." Minutes later, a motorist reported finding the minivan on an embankment beside a nearby highway. Jered was apparently driving the minivan when he shot himself with a .22-caliber revolver. Jered had recently been suspended from school and friends reported he had fought constantly with his mother. Notes found at the scene, which authorities believe were written by Jered, indicate he was dissatisfied with his home life and had planned the crime in advance. The deaths were ruled as homicide and suicide.

5. Ann Weiland, 47

La Crescent

March 4, 1994

Ann was shot and killed by her ex-husband, Robert Weiland, 52, who later committed suicide. Friends and family reported that for 27 years Ann had endured an abusive marriage. In January 1993, she fled to her sisters and never went back. She stayed in a battered women's shelter, obtained restraining orders in Minnesota and Wisconsin to prevent her husband from contacting her, and initiated divorce proceedings. But Robert Weiland repeatedly stalked Ann. So she began making plans with her fiance, Dr. Burton Simon, to begin a new life out of state where, hopefully, her ex-husband couldn't find her. On the evening of March 4th, as Ann and Burton pulled into their driveway, Ann was shot six times by Robert Weiland. One shot passed through Ann and into Burton's side. As Robert Weiland reloaded, Burton floored the accelerator, struck Weiland with the car and was able to flee. Nine hours later, a sheriff's deputy stopped Weiland on a road 15 miles from the shooting and watched him commit suicide. In 1993, after Ann left

12. Kathy Newbloom, 39**Rural Duluth****July 30, 1994**

Kathy was found dead in her home. She died from a single gunshot wound to her head. Authorities arrested her 16-year-old son, Elijah Newbloom. He admitted killing Kathy, saying he searched his home for a hidden rifle, waited for his mother to fall asleep and then shot her to death. He pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to 37 ½ years in prison. Kathy worked in the St. Louis County Attorney's office.

13. Lana Lee Martin, 30**Maplewood****September 10, 1994**

Lana was found dead in a van in Minneapolis after she was reported missing by co-workers who found her purse and car abandoned at the workplace. Lana had been stabbed multiple times. A former boyfriend, John Ellis, 53, who had lived with Lana in the past, was arrested and charged with second-degree murder. He is alleged to have cut Lana's throat and repeatedly stabbed her in the chest. Lana was in the process of obtaining a court restraining order against Ellis, who had beaten her in the past.

14. Dianne Emmerson, 44**St. Paul****September 10, 1994**

Dianne and her fiancé, Michael Kemski, 54, were found shot to death in their home from an apparent murder-suicide. Friends of Dianne reported she had called them the previous evening saying she had split up with Kemski and had told him she was moving out.

15. Lois Cooke, 48**Racine****September 25, 1994**

Lois and her daughters, Nicole, 14, and Holly, 15, were shot to death by their father, James Cooke, 63. He then wrote a suicide note and shot himself four times. He died on the way to the hospital. Cooke had learned that his daughters had recently told their mother that he sexually abused them. Lois had contacted a sheriff's investigator about the abuse and the investigator urged Lois to take her daughters to a shelter or safe home. Lois and her daughters decided to stay in the family home for the weekend, believing they would be safe. However, Cooke discovered that a sexual abuse report had been made. Investigators are unclear whether Lois confronted him or whether he learned by tape-recording her conversations. Investigators found wires in the house suggesting the latter theory. Cooke denied the abuse allegations in his suicide note. Cooke shot the two girls as they slept--each with one shot to the forehead with a .22-caliber gun. He then cleaned the blood from his daughters' bodies and laid out clothes for their funerals at the foot of their beds. Lois was shot with a .380-caliber handgun and was then carried back to the couple's bed. Cooke then called his son, Alan, out-of-state and reported the homicides. He told his son to call a neighbor and hung up. Cooke shot himself twice in the chest and twice under the chin. Nicole and Holly had been adopted from Korea by Lois and a previous husband. When she remarried Cooke, he had adopted the girls. Schoolmates reported that Nicole and Holly were cheerful and happy. Both were honor roll students.

16. Sandra Jackson, 41**Minneapolis****November 21, 1994**

Sandra was found dead in her apartment. She had been strangled to death by her former boyfriend, Curtis Osborne, 37, with whom she had previously lived. Osborne reported the murder at a medical center nearby. Osborne pled guilty to second-degree murder charges in November and was expected to be sentenced to 13 to 16 years and eight months in prison. This sentence would be 35 months longer than sentencing guidelines call for. It was sought because Sandra was killed in her own apartment, she was vulnerable because she was intoxicated, and Osborne had stolen a ring from her after her death.

17. Tulin Schreiber, 39**Coon Rapids****November 23, 1994**

Tulin's estranged husband, Steven Schreiber, 39, confessed to police that he shot and killed Tulin and her daughter, Shyla Mujwid, in their home. Tulin was shot in the abdomen and Shyla was shot in the head and thigh. Schreiber also shot their 5-year-old son, Matthew Schreiber, in the back of the knee and hip, but police believe he was struck by stray gunfire. Schreiber was found holding Matthew when police arrived. Matthew was hospitalized but was shortly released. Schreiber told police he planned to kill himself, but ran out of bullets. Family friends reported that Schreiber had a history of depression and that Tulin had been worried because he had run out of medication. The couple had separated last winter. On January 31st, police had responded to a "domestic disturbance" at the home by Tulin, who had asked for police assistance in getting her husband to leave the house. The police report noted that Schreiber did leave, but his wife told officers she feared he would return, so she packed bags and went to a friend's house. Since that time, Tulin moved into a townhouse not far from the home, and Schreiber was seen there by neighbors during visitation exchanges. He also reportedly stayed at the townhouse occasionally. Shyla, Tulin's daughter from a previous marriage, had a friend, 18, sleeping over when the shootings occurred. She reported that she and Shyla were asleep at 6 a.m. when they heard Schreiber enter the house. They then heard a loud boom and Matthew crying. Schreiber then opened their bedroom door and was holding a rifle and talking about suicide. When he left the room, Shyla followed him and shouted, "Steve, don't do it." The friend then heard two loud bangs, then heard Schreiber go upstairs. She found Shyla in the family room with a shot in the head. The friend then hid in the garage, until police found her. Shyla was a senior in high school and played soccer, tennis and softball. School officials described her as an outstanding student. Neighbors and co-workers described Schreiber as "a nice, quiet neighbor" and "a super guy...really good with kids." Schreiber was charged with first-degree murder.

18. Raquel Renee Ripka, 25**Plymouth****December 30, 1994**

Raquel's body and the body of her estranged husband, Brian Ripka, 30, were found in Ripka's apartment. Autopsies found the two died from cuts to their throats. Evidence indicated Ripka cut his wife's throat with a kitchen knife and then did the same to himself. The Ripkas were divorcing and Raquel had moved out of their home. The day before she was found dead, Raquel had borrowed a friend's car to visit her husband so he could sign divorce papers. When she didn't return, the friend contacted police. Police believe troubles with the divorce led to the killings. No note was found at the scene.

CHILDREN MURDERED:**1. DeJohn Speed, 4****St. Paul****January 5, 1994**

DeJohn was found dead by paramedics who were summoned to his home. His foster mother, Jonnie Lee Ross, 51, told paramedics that DeJohn was ill and had also fallen down the stairs several times shortly before his death. Ross's teenage children reported to authorities that she had beaten DeJohn in the past and on the afternoon he died. The medical examiner reported that DeJohn had numerous internal and external injuries, including facial and scalp abrasions and abdominal injuries. There was also evidence of older injuries, including injuries on the back and buttocks. Ross was charged with second-degree murder and was convicted of DeJohn's murder.

2. Megan Olson, 2**Columbia Heights****January 9, 1994**

Megan and her mother were discovered on a bed in their home. Megan's mother, Christine Olson, 25, told authorities that she had given Megan medication to make her sleep and then put a pillow over her face. When Megan stopped breathing, Olson went to bed with her and took an overdose of pills. She awoke and then cut herself with a kitchen knife. Olson said she had decided to commit suicide and thought her estranged husband was incapable of caring for their daughter, so she decided to kill her daughter as well. Olson was charged with second-degree murder.

3. Victoria Vela, 7 months**Willmar****January 18, 1994**

Paramedics were called to help a child who was not breathing. Victoria was found with bruises and abrasions on her face and chest and was hospitalized for a short time before she died. The boyfriend of Victoria's mother, Alberto Carpentier, 26, was charged with two counts of second-degree murder and one count of first-degree assault. He was found guilty and was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

4. Holly Cooke, 15**Racine****September 25, 1994****5. Nicole Cooke, 14**

Nicole and Holly were killed, along with their mother, Lois Cooke, by their father, James Cooke, who then committed suicide. Nicole and Holly had recently told their mother that their father had sexually abused them.

6. Tyrice Gadsden, 14 months**Minneapolis****November 2, 1994**

Tyrice died of multiple blunt force injuries. Police have ruled his death a homicide. There are suspects in this death but no charges have been filed.

7. Shyla Mujwid, 17**Coon Rapids****November 23, 1994**

Shyla's stepfather, Steven Schreiber, confessed to killing Shyla, along with her mother, Tulin. Please see Tulin Schreiber above in the Women Murdered section.

WOMEN MURDERED WHILE BEING USED IN PROSTITUTION:**1. Heidi Brummett, 26****St. Paul****July 7, 1994**

Heidi was found shot to death in an alley. She was being used in prostitution. Adrian Keys, 17, who police suspected was a "john," was certified as an adult and charged with second-degree murder in her death.

2. Tina Marie Kalland, 27**Minneapolis****August 2, 1994**

Tina's body was found in an apartment. She was being used in prostitution. Police reported having a suspect, a "john", whom they intended to charge.

1994 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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