



Milwaukee County

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Ex-Milwaukeean charged with brutal sex trafficking

By John Diedrich of the Journal Sentinel Aug. 3, 2009

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Derrick Avery

A Milwaukee native ran a ruthless prostitution ring across the country for more than a decade, pimping girls as young as 14 and beating and torturing them when they didn't make him enough money, according to a federal criminal complaint unsealed Monday.

Derrick Avery, 42, also known as "Pimp Snooky," recruited his prostitutes at bus stations and off the street, wooing them with pricey clothes and jewelry, according to documents. One prostitute said Avery was "selling me my dreams."

Once Avery persuaded them to become sex workers, he forced the prostitutes to earn at least \$500 a night - and sometimes much more, the remarkably detailed 26-page criminal complaint says. He beat those who disobeyed him with pots, pool cues, broom handles, belts and shoes and burned them with cigarette butts, it says.

Avery also employed what he called the hot and cold treatment, it says. For the hot treatment, Avery poured rubbing alcohol on the prostitutes' skin and ignited it. For the cold treatment, he forced prostitutes to sit in a tub of ice-cube-filled water for as long as it took for a cigarette to burn

down, the complaint says.

"Congress has recognized these types of activities destroy forever the lives of the women involved in sex trafficking," the prosecutor, Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Wall, said of federal trafficking crimes. "These are not victimless crimes."

Avery was arrested Friday in Las Vegas, where he lives. Also arrested were Shamika Evans, 28, known as "Mika" and described as his top prostitute, and a third woman who is not charged.

Authorities are moving to bring Avery and Evans to Milwaukee. Avery is charged with three counts of sex trafficking minors. Evans is charged with two counts. If convicted, they each face up to life in prison.

Avery has gained wide attention as a pimp, appearing in documentaries and on "The Jerry Springer Show." In the 1999 "Pimps Up, Ho's Down" film, Avery spoke about how to be a pimp, at one point saying, "Let me pimp or let me die." He wore an enormous ring with a pimp holding prostitutes on a leash.

On several Web sites, Avery says he has never been a pimp, but an actor playing a pimp. "I was not then, nor was I ever a pimp," he says.

Avery surfaced in the 2008 extortion and bribery trial of former Milwaukee Ald. Michael McGee. On recorded calls, McGee sought money from Avery, who owned a club on N. King Drive called Marjani's. McGee helped Avery get a special hearing on a liquor license for the club, a City Hall official testified.

McGee said he needed money for his rent and Avery offered to fly McGee to Las Vegas, saying, "I'll be shaking your hand with something beautiful," according to the call. Avery was not charged in the McGee case and did not testify.

Avery owned other businesses in Milwaukee, including a shoe and clothing store, the complaint says. In Las Vegas, he invested in auto and home leasing businesses.

According to the federal criminal complaint - which quotes seven witnesses, a high number by court standards - Avery has pimped girls and women since at least 1997. In 2003, Avery and Evans recruited a 14-year-old girl from Chicago. Avery started assaults on the girl a week after she began selling sex for him, beating her with a pool cue and later with pots, bats, chairs, belts and Avery's "gator" shoes, it says. He later stabbed the girl in the buttocks after he learned she was talking to another pimp, it says.

The 14-year-old and other girls traveled to Chicago seven nights a week and were required to make at least \$500 apiece, the complaint says. She later worked in Vegas and was required to make \$1,000 to \$1,500, but sometimes brought in \$5,000 a night, it says.

Avery required the girl to do more than have sex. She had to empty ashtrays, fill Avery's glass and serve him food - on separate plates because he didn't like his food mixed, it says. Avery also had sex with his prostitutes, fathering several children with them, the complaint says.

Avery pressured the 14-year-old and other prostitutes to finish the sex acts quickly, saying it should take no more time than to smoke a cigarette, it says. He also required them to rob the men after finishing the sex.

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