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Nine Defendants Sentenced to Federal Prison for Sex Trafficking

DES MOINES, Iowa – Between January and March 2019, nine defendants were sentenced to significant prison terms for sex trafficking and related offenses in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Iowa, announced United States Attorney Marc Krickbaum.

On March 13, 2019, the last of seven co-defendants charged with sex trafficking was sentenced before United States District Court Chief Judge John A. Jarvey. On February 5, 2019, the lead defendant in that case, Darren O. Coleman, was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Coleman had previously pleaded guilty to sex trafficking an adult by force, fraud, or coercion. At his sentencing hearing, Coleman was found by the Court to have trafficked several adult women in Des Moines, Iowa and Atlanta, Georgia. Coleman's co-defendant, Mark Phillip Carter II, pleaded guilty to sex trafficking a minor. At Carter's January 16, 2019 sentencing, he was found to have trafficked additional young women. Carter was sentenced to 175 months in prison. Stephen Kalu Cobb, who was sentenced on March 13, 2019, pled guilty to sex trafficking an adult woman by force, fraud or coercion. Cobb was sentenced to 190 months in prison and ordered to pay \$15,000 in restitution to his victim. Other defendants included: Julyen Xavier Singleton – sentenced to 21 months in prison; Ronzell Montez Williams – sentenced to 36 months in prison; Breeanna Lynae Brown – sentenced to 50 months in prison; and Sarina Ann Williams – sentenced to 135 months in prison.

All seven defendants were Des Moines residents, who trafficked their victims in Des Moines, Iowa. The defendants exploited their victims' vulnerabilities in order to coerce them into engaging in commercial sex acts, from which the defendants financially benefitted. These vulnerabilities included the victims' age, substance abuse issues, financial hardship, or court supervision. The defendants used physical violence, threats of violence, emotional manipulation, and other means to coerce their victims into engaging in commercial sex acts. During the sentencing of Carter, Chief Judge Jarvey cited the impact of sex trafficking on its victims. "This is exceedingly serious behavior. It was repeated, it was abusive, it was lucrative, it was degrading, it was depraved, and it damaged young women irrevocably." At Coleman's sentencing hearing, Chief Judge Jarvey further acknowledged the seriousness of sex trafficking. "I can't think of a more serious offense that I've seen. It was serious because it involved astounding depravity. It was serious because it involved violence. It is serious because the level of manipulation necessary to do this was chilling . . . It was cold and calculated and you developed an organization to sell human beings. I think worst of all it is serious because you preyed on weakness and people who prey on the weak or the infirm produce some of the worst crimes."

The seven-defendant case was investigated by the Des Moines Police Department, Vice and Narcotics Control Section.

Two additional defendants guilty of sex trafficking were sentenced in January 2019. On January 10, 2019, Antoine Lee Washington, age 34, was sentenced to 327 months in prison to be followed by ten years of supervised release for sex trafficking charges. United States District Court Judge Stephanie M. Rose ordered Washington to pay restitution to the victims totaling \$29,500. On August 1, 2018, Washington had been found guilty of one count of sex trafficking of an adult by force, fraud, or coercion, and one count of transportation for purposes of

prostitution, following a three-day jury trial. At Washington's sentencing hearing, Judge Rose remarked Washington's "offense involves the defendant's horrific systemic abuse and torture of [the victim] in order to force her to prostitute on his behalf for years. During the course of those crimes, he hogtied her, he repeatedly burned her, he savagely beat her, he slapped her, he raped her, and otherwise terrorized her."

The Washington case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Urbandale Police Department.

On January 2, 2019, Bree Deontez Wright was sentenced to 151 months in prison for sex trafficking a minor. Chief Judge Jarvey ordered Wright to pay \$20,000 in restitution to the victim of the offense. Wright had trafficked a teenage victim over the course of several months. At his sentencing hearing, Chief Judge Jarvey remarked, "It's serious because the depravity of treating another human being like this is just enormous. It's serious because it was manipulative. It's serious because it was abusive, and it's serious because you preyed on young women for money."

The Wright case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Human trafficking is defined as a crime involving the exploitation of youth under the age of 18 for commercial sex; the exploitation of adults for commercial sex through the use of force, threats of force, fraud, or coercion; and the exploitation of any individual for compelled labor. Human trafficking does not require the transportation of individuals across state lines, or that someone is physically restrained. Signs that a person is being trafficked can include working excessively long hours, unexplained gifts, physical injury, substance abuse issues, running away from home, isolation from others, or having a person in their life controlling them or monitoring them closely. Anyone who suspects human trafficking is occurring, be it a minor engaging in paid

sex acts, or anyone being coerced into prostitution or labor, is urged to call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

These cases were prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Iowa.

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