

The WATCH Chronicle

WATCH is a court monitoring and judicial policy non-profit located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. WATCH works to make the justice system more responsive to crimes of violence against women and children, focusing on greater safety for victims of violence and greater accountability for violent offenders.

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Jeffrey John Latawiec.

WATCH FEATURE

CHRONOLOGY OF AN OFFENDER: Jeffrey John Latawiec

Jeffrey John Latawiec, 32, has an extensive criminal history of violence against women and children, culminating in his Aug. 9, 2013 sentencing for promoting and soliciting prostitution of a 17-year-old girl. He is currently serving a six-year prison term, less than a quarter of the presumptive sentence for a person with his criminal history.

Latawiec's criminal activity began at age 19, with a first-degree conviction for burglary and motor vehicle theft. Between 2007 and 2010, he was arrested fifteen times for offenses ranging from domestic assault, making terroristic threats, theft, violating domestic assault no-contact orders and violating orders for protection.

In 2007 alone, Latawiec was arrested nine times for offenses against a single victim, Victim A. Four of those arrests resulted in no charges. On Feb. 10, he was arrested and later charged with: interfering with an emergency call, domestic assault, disorderly conduct, and theft of \$200 or less. Latawiec pleaded guilty to theft, a misdemeanor that cannot be used to enhance the sentence if there is a future domestic violence conviction; all other charges were dropped.

In March 2007, Latawiec was arrested but never charged for allegedly violating a domestic abuse no-contact order against Victim A, and for fifth-degree domestic assault. Two months later, he was arrested and convicted of making terroristic threats against Victim A. In July 2007, he was arrested for fifth-degree assault, but again was not charged.

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Latawiec's 11-year criminal history culminated in 2012, with charges resulting from the sex trafficking of an underage runaway.

In early 2008, Latawiec was arrested several times for alleged offenses against Victim A including: 911 call interference (twice), domestic assault, domestic assault by strangulation, and making terroristic threats. None of the arrests led to charges.

On July 21, 2008 Latawiec was convicted of domestic assault-fear, a gross misdemeanor, and theft. A WATCH court monitor noted that the prosecutor wanted him in prison and offered credit for time served. The prosecutor also agreed to bypass a pre-sentencing investigation so Latawiec would agree to be sentenced to prison the same day. The court took his criminal history into account and sentenced him to one year, with credit for 49 days served.

In October 2009, shortly after being released from custody, Latawiec was charged with violating an order for protection that was to be in effect until June of 2010. Latawiec's mother provided daycare for the child he had with Victim A, and on October 16, Victim A dropped the child off with plans to pick up the child the next day so that the child could attend an out-of-town wedding with Latawiec's mother. Latawiec, however, took the child and did not return her in time to leave with the grandmother for the trip. Latawiec then called Victim A, telling her to pick up the child because he was getting tired of her and threatened to drop the child off at the police station.

Latawiec called Victim A five times the next day, including early in the morning, when he asked her to pick him up from a strip club. After he left a message later in the day to come pick up the child, she reached the house only to find that the child was not there. Victim A then flagged down police for help, and when an officer called Latawiec, he said he would return the child the next day and didn't care whether he was arrested. An unknown female later dropped the child off at Victim A's address, saying she had had the child since the previous evening.

On June 15, 2010, Latawiec pled guilty to violating the order of protection. The court also found that since committing that crime, he had been charged with a felony—stealing and misuse of a motor vehicle, and had been listed as a predatory offender but failed to register. He was sentenced to 2½ years in prison with credit for 141 days served.

Latawiec's 11-year criminal history culminated in 2012, with charges resulting from the sex trafficking of an underage runaway. (Her story was chronicled in a four-part *Star Tribune* series entitled "[Saving Bobbi](#)".) According to a criminal complaint, a woman notified police on July 31 that her 17-year-old daughter had run away. An officer found that a phone number associated with the girl belonged to Latawiec.

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In mid-August, the officer found the number on a backpage.com female escorts site, beside a picture of the victim. An officer set up an appointment with the victim and arrested her on August 14.

Upon her arrest, the victim said she had met Latawiec and another man a few days earlier and agreed to go to Latawiec's home to get high. She then placed an ad on backpage.com using Latawiec's number and later was paid to have sex with several men at Latawiec's home. Latawiec ordered the victim to give him all of the money she made.

On Aug. 13, the victim packed up her things and tried to leave, but Latawiec and the other man confronted her, telling her she needed to make more money first. Eventually, the victim was able to leave when a friend picked her up.

Latawiec was charged in Hennepin County with two felony counts of soliciting, inducing and promoting prostitution; one of the counts referred to an underage victim. He was out on bond for nearly a year, until the week of his sentencing. Because his criminal conduct had escalated into the prostitution of a minor, Latawiec was subject to a prison sentence of up to 20 years. Even so, and despite the fact that the prosecutor requested a ten-year sentence and the victim's father asked for for no less than 7½ years, Latawiec accepted a plea deal and was sentenced on Aug. 9, 2013 to a prison term of six years, with credit for 37 days served.

In a letter to the *Star Tribune* published later in the week, WATCH board members Kate Kelly and Randy Debruyne wrote: "This plea deal was negotiated behind closed doors ... Certainly it was best that the girl not have to endure going through and testifying at a trial, but 72 months—less than one-fourth of the time called for? ... Until these perpetrators are given real sentences that are commensurate with the crime and their criminal history, women and children will continue to be devalued in our society."

At the very least, Jeffrey John Latawiec had a six-year history of violence at the time of his sentencing, with barely any time spent in prison. His criminal conduct escalated into the prostitution of a minor which alone, according to Minnesota statute, could get him 20 years in prison. Is less than six years, considering his pattern and history of violence, really enough?"

IN THE NEWS

VISA, Mastercard drop Backpage.com

Breaking news: It just got tougher to post an ad on backpage.com, the online service authorities have repeatedly linked to sex trafficking and prostitution.

On July 2, VISA announced [that it was joining Mastercard](#) in no longer allowing cardholders to use its card to make a purchase on the website. The news was widely carried on national media outlets.

The cardholders' move comes after [Sheriff Tom Dart of Cook County, Illinois, petitioned both companies to withdraw](#) as payment options on the adult section of the site. Dart's office estimates that Backpage.com posted over 1.4 million ads for sex in April alone. He says many of the women being advertised are trafficking victims, including a large number of juveniles.

American Express announced earlier this year that it would no longer do business with Backpage.com.

[Federal laws protect Backpage.com](#) from being liable for what is posted on its website.

- Read the TIME article [here](#).
- Read the article in the *The Guardian* [here](#).
- Read CNN's report [here](#).

- How much money is Backpage.com accused of making per month in adult service ads?
- What is the only form of currency that now can be used to place ads on the website?
- How many people has Dart's office arrested based on the website's ads since 2009?

To find out, read the news articles in [TIME](#) and [The Guardian](#).

Op-ed: Death penalty would do nothing to deter sex trafficking

A state representative from Utah has proposed imposing the death penalty on individuals who engage in child sex trafficking. But a column in the *Salt Lake Tribune* argues that such a proposal is far too simplistic to make a meaningful difference. In a [June 6 op-ed](#), Jean Hill writes: "Ending human trafficking of any sort requires far more comprehensive solutions than a penalty assessed to the perpetrator."

Hill lauds Utah legislators who, like those in Minnesota, have passed laws recognizing that teen-age runaways and prostitutes are more likely to be victims than criminals. She also says providing comprehensive services to victims should be the first priority.

“While more study is needed to uncover the best practices in the fight against trafficking, what is certain is that the death penalty is not an effective deterrent,” Hill concludes.

Read the op-ed [here](#).

- What does Jean Hill argue should be included in training those who work with trafficking victims?
- Why does Hill say it’s more important to focus on better services for victims and improved relationships with law enforcement than on imposing a death sentence on traffickers?

Read Hill’s [column](#) to find out.

Klobuchar, McCain team up to combat sex trafficking

Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota recently joined with Cindy McCain, the wife of Arizona Sen. John McCain, and other human rights advocates in calling for more aggressive action against sex trafficking.

Klobuchar and McCain appeared at a public forum on sex trafficking in St. Paul last month. *Pioneer Press* reporter Ben Bartenstein covered the forum in a [news article](#) published June 29.

Sex trafficking has spiked in Minnesota since North Dakota’s oil boom in 2000, with cases of local youth transported the 500 miles between the Twin Cities and the Bakken oil fields.

Klobuchar, a Democrat, has been a leader in national efforts to thwart trafficking crimes and increase legal support for victims, co-sponsoring a bill that unanimously passed the Senate Judiciary Committee. President Barack Obama signed it into law in May.

Read the *Pioneer Press* article [here](#).

- How many trafficking-related convictions did Minnesota have between 2007 and 2013?
- How many people does the U.S. Justice Department say are trafficked each year nationwide?
- True or false? Until Minnesota passed Safe Harbor legislation in 2011, the number of victims for victims outnumbered those for their traffickers.

Read the [article](#) find out.

COURT MONITORING BULLETIN

News of WATCH's court monitoring activities

Monitor Spotlight: April Spas



April Spas has always been drawn to public affairs and politics, but never had contact with the courts until last November, when she volunteered for WATCH. She recalls being called for jury duty a single time, in New York State—"back in the days when you could be excused if you checked the box labeled 'WOMAN.'" (She checked it because it was exam week and she was a student.)

Spas is one of the 180 volunteers WATCH relies on to provide a consistent public presence in Hennepin County courtrooms. Since January, volunteers have spent more than 1,300 hours monitoring court cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and neglect.

Spas, who ran a marketing research business before selling it in 1998, first heard about WATCH on public radio and signed up to volunteer several months later. Recently, she shared her impressions with WATCH from her past several months in the courtroom.

"I always seek out volunteer experiences that give me an opportunity to be exposed to and learn new things. I had never set foot inside a courtroom in my life, so WATCH seemed like a perfect fit for me."

Q: What motivated you to volunteer?

A: Three things motivated me to finally take action. The first is that we had just had an election—and once again I had no idea who I was voting for when I voted for judges. Second, I had been following news reports of domestic violence in the media. Lastly, I always seek out volunteer experiences that give me an opportunity to be exposed to and learn new things. I had never set foot inside a courtroom in my life, so WATCH seemed like a perfect fit for me.

Q: Can you estimate how much time you spend as a WATCH volunteer?

A: WATCH allows volunteers to schedule around their lifestyles. A couple of shifts a month is all that they require. My volunteering schedule allows me to do the minimum when I am travelling and then do a lot of shifts and follow certain cases when I have time. For the past several months I've done a lot of volunteering because I've been in town. Every time [WATCH] puts out a call for more shifts or for specific cases, I jump in to help.

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Q: How has your experience as a monitor colored your ideas about domestic violence?

A: I've learned that domestic violence is just one of a myriad of problems and issues that the victim and aggressor face. Each case is unique and falls on a scale of terribly sad to terribly brutal. The cases are often complicated and offer no simple solutions, no happy endings.

Q: Along the same lines, what has your volunteer work taught you about the way domestic violence is prosecuted?

A: At first I was surprised by how much leeway the judges have in dealing with the cases, but I've discovered that they need the leeway in order to deal with the complexities involved. Also, when I first started, I assumed that the prosecutors were acting on behalf of the victims and that the victims were aware of and agreed with the terms of the plea. I've learned that is not the case. There are lots of reasons why pleas are agreed upon—many of which have nothing to do with the concerns of the victim.

Q: What's been the most challenging aspect of monitoring the courts?

A: The first challenge is ambivalence—I want to cheer when a judge holds a DANCO [domestic violence no-contact order] hearing over the objection of the public defender, while at the same time, I cringe because I'm a member of the ACLU and believe that the rights of the defendant should be protected. This internal conflict is no small thing because a real life may be at risk and I believe deeply in civil rights.

The second challenge is more trivial but reveals a fundamental disrespect. The calendar can show 15 cases all scheduled at the same time and no one knows which case will be taken in which order. That means that spectators (victims, defendants, victim advocates, attorneys, family members) waste a lot of time sitting around. If a person was taking time off from a job with hourly pay, it's not only annoying, but costly. In addition, during the waiting the attorneys carry on personal conversations about their expensive vacations or weekend activities as though the spectators were not even in the room.

Q: What's been most gratifying for you about your work as a monitor?

A: Although I have almost no contact with victims, I believe that the comments I write as part of my reports have the potential to change things for the better. Statistics are one thing, but personal observations [offer] depth and context for the numbers.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

A: I may be overstating this, but it is my impression that there is a built-in, open bias toward people who have money. In an overwhelming number of cases the judge makes an offer to the defendants: release *without* bail but with a number of conditions OR release *with* bail and no conditions. No conditions? Really?

SEX TRAFFICKING UPDATE

Summer Heating Up



According to a criminal complaint, the juvenile victim told police that she had been brought to the Twin Cities by a friend in December 2013 and dropped off at a trailer in Burnsville, where she met Moore, or “Mo,” and an associate named “Toast,” later identified as Bryant.

July and August promise to be busy months for disposing of sex trafficking cases in Hennepin and Ramsey counties. Of the 15 cases WATCH is tracking that still await resolution, four are slated for jury trials in July and another trial is scheduled for August. In Ramsey County, the sex trafficking case of **Ishmael Jamaïne Williams** recently resulted in a plea bargain, with sentencing set for late August. And in Hennepin County, defendant **Yolanda Katrice Foster** is expected to be sentenced in late August after agreeing to a plea bargain on sex trafficking charges.

The cases of a pair of men accused of trafficking a 16-year-old girl are also set to be resolved this summer. **Joshua William Bryant**, 33, and **Jonathan Dimitri Moore**, 29, are each charged in Hennepin County with felony counts of promoting prostitution—punishable by prison sentences of up to 20 years.

According to a criminal complaint, the juvenile victim told police that she had been brought to the Twin Cities by a friend in December 2013 and dropped off at a trailer in Burnsville, where she met Moore, or “Mo,” and an associate named “Toast,” later identified as Bryant.

The victim said she was taken to a Minneapolis hotel, where Moore allegedly took photos of her, which later were included in online ads offering prostitution services, according to the complaint. She told police men came to the hotel room and paid her for sex acts. She allegedly gave the money to Moore, who gave her drugs, alcohol and condoms.

The complaint alleges that the victim also was paid for sex in another hotel, and went on “out calls” to various locations for paid sex. Although the victim’s father was able to get her away from Moore and Bryant in January, police learned that she again went missing later that month. It was then that police discovered an online ad containing a photo of the victim and called the number to set up a meeting at a Minneapolis hotel. Officers found the victim entering a vehicle near the hotel, where they also found Moore and Bryant.

The victim later said that Moore placed ads for her and answered text messages to arrange meetings and negotiate her fee—allegedly receiving \$200 for one call. According to the complaint, Bryant picked her up afterwards and Moore took the money, giving a portion to Bryant.

As of early July, Bryant was to be sentenced July 20 after agreeing to a plea bargain on a felony charge of solicitation, inducement and promotion of prostitution of a juvenile. A jury trial for Moore was scheduled for early July on a charge of promoting the prostitution of a juvenile.

From the Intern Blog

Friday, June 12, 2015

“Being a court monitor, I’ve seen many different events in court rooms. I have learned a lot about what the court process is like, but I have also felt like I have influenced judges. When a judge sees me with my red clipboard standing in their courtroom, I think they become more respectful to all parties. I like court monitoring because it shows other people, like defendants and victims, that someone cares about their case.”

As an intern, I participate in a lot of court monitoring, but I also help research sex trafficking in the Twin Cities. Working with WATCH, I think I help make the legal system more accountable for their actions.”