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SEX FOR MONEY

PROSTITUTION FLOURISHES IN THE DUKE CITY

A well-known UNM professor and former university president is arrested and charged with helping manage a massive online prostitution site. ¶ Weeks later, a long-time criminal court judge is arrested and accused of raping a prostitute. ¶ Both men have pleaded innocent, and both cases involved allegations of selling sex over the Web, which police say is now the vehicle of choice for Albuquerque's sex workers.

Story by Astrid Galvan
Illustration by Cathryn Cunningham
Of the Journal

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Around noon Wednesday on Central Avenue, the sun was burning and the tired-looking woman — we'll call her "Lou" — had just fallen for the classic police prostitution sting.

Lou got in a pickup truck with an undercover Albuquerque vice detective. As other undercover detectives trailed behind, the detective in the pickup tried to set up what police call a "date," or a formal deal, to exchange money for sex.

The moment Lou agreed to a deal, the detective signaled to his colleagues, who surrounded his pickup. The detective pulled over, and Lou was soon placed in cuffs.

At 38, Lou looked more like a modest house-cleaner than a prostitute: She wore black pants, a white button-up shirt and her hair was pulled back in a ponytail.

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Lou's Unlucky Story

Lured by the apparent safety and 'fast cash' of prostitution, Lou found herself trapped A6

A Dangerous Trade

Prostitutes are nearly 18 times more likely to be homicide victims than other women A6

White Plans To File Protest

Ex-Official Says Wife's Medical Records Leaked

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By DAN MCKAY
Journal Staff Writer

Darren White isn't done fighting. White, Albuquerque's ex-director of public safety, said Saturday that he is preparing to file state and federal complaints over the release of a paramedic report that outlined his wife's medical history after she was involved in a one-car accident. White believes the information was leaked to reporters in violation of privacy laws.



WHITE: Preparing state and federal complaints

"My wife, she's not a public figure," White said in Journal interview. "She was a patient that day, and somebody who leaked the medical records viewed her as a political-attack opportunity."

He said he intends to file complaints with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as well as the state government.

No one should "have to worry that their private medical information is going to be shared with the public on the 10 o'clock news," White said. "...That's unfinished business."

White's comments came a day after the release of a report from the city's Independent Review Officer, who determined that White didn't interfere with the police investigation into his wife's accident. Paramedics said they were intimidated by White's presence at the scene, but that they were able to do their jobs effectively, according to the IRO report.

See WHITE on PAGE A7

Debt-Limit Talks Progress Reported

Plan raises ceiling by \$2.4 trillion, cuts spending same amount

By LORI MONTGOMERY
AND ROSALIND S. HELDERMAN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — With the prospect of a government default just three days away, the White House entered intense negotiations with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Saturday in a last-ditch bid to forge a bipartisan agreement to raise the federal debt limit.



MCCONNELL: In meetings with vice president

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., announced that talks between McConnell, R-Ky., and Vice President Joe Biden had made significant progress, prompting Reid to delay a vote that had been scheduled for today on his own debt-limit measure.

"There are negotiations going on at the White House to avert a catastrophic default on the nation's debt," said Reid, after announcing that the vote had been pushed back to 1 p.m. "There are many elements to be finalized, and there is still a distance to go before any arrangement can be completed. But I believe we should give everyone as much room as possible to do their work."

He added: "I'm glad to see this move toward cooperation and compromise. I hope it bears fruit."

The emerging agreement calls for raising

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Praying for Rain on the Plains

Leslie Linthicum
UPFRONT

A man called up the newspaper one recent hot, cloudless day and suggested we clear off the front page in the next morning's edition except for the headline: **THINK RAIN.** Is there anyone who's not thinking rain? During the past few months, when it seemed like it would never rain again, to the past few weeks as the monsoon arrived like a bad house guest — disorganized, tight-fisted and late — it has



Virginia Vigil was one of the faithful asking for a blessing of a shower in 2008.

been easy to fall for the lure of superstition. We wash the car, leave the windows open and hang the wash on the line, begging to be made a fool by a good rain

storm. There are people who also believe that bathing a cat, killing a spider or hanging

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INSIDE

Victims remembered

Four siblings were killed in Texas roller rink shooting A3



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Internet Helps Prostitution Thrive

from PAGE A1

Though an admittedly long-time prostitute in the city, with a rap sheet to prove it, she did not fit the stereotype of the high-heeled, skin-showing streetwalker flaunting her assets.

Neither did the 17-year-old girl called "Kate," whom police picked up a few weeks ago in a different sting — this one involving the Internet.

A detective answered an ad on backpage.com, the site police say is most commonly used by prostitutes seeking johns. The pimp who had been spotted leaving her hotel room was eventually arrested.

On the street or on the Internet, the sex trade continues to thrive in Albuquerque, according to police.

And the recent arrests of two high-profile community leaders have brought it into the spotlight.

Neither case involved the infamous "Track" — the area of East Central between Eubank and San Mateo that has long been the haunt of street-walking prostitutes.

Instead, the prostitutes that now-retired state District Judge Albert S. "Pat" Murdoch and former University of New Mexico President F. Chris Garcia are accused of doing business with — as a customer in Murdoch's case and as an operator of a ring in Garcia's — come from the World Wide Web.

"We've seen an explosion of prostitution on the Internet," Sgt. Matt Thompson said, adding, "We're just seeing more prostitution in general."

Hundreds of arrests

The Albuquerque Police Department's vice unit, usually composed of three detectives, made about 450 prostitution-related arrests last year and has made about 200 so far this year.

That includes prostitutes, pimps and johns.

Roughly 100 or so "johns" — individuals who solicit prostitutes — are charged each year. Thompson said vice tries to focus on johns as much as prostitutes, but there are discrepancies between how each are treated once in the legal system.

For example, it's extremely rare for a john to serve any time other than immediately after the arrest. So rare, Thompson said, that he's never seen a john be sentenced to any jail time. The men usually have to pay fines of about \$100 and court costs.

Prostitutes can be sentenced from a few days to several months, depending on their prior criminal record.

As police don't have a breakdown of how many of those involved use of the Internet, Thompson, who heads the vice unit, said advertising services on the Internet is becoming the more prevalent method of selling sex.

For example, a daylong sting on Central might result in 10 arrests, according to



APD vice detectives cuff a woman accused of prostitution on Wednesday. The woman had agreed to a "date" with an undercover detective.



An Albuquerque police vice detective checks the ID of a man suspected of being a "john," during an undercover operation on Wednesday. The man, who said he was only offering the female undercover detective a ride, had made a deal to exchange \$20 for sex, police said.

ALBUQUERQUE METRO COURT MISDEMEANOR CHARGES											
	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11*
Criminal Solicitation	56	67	51	78	84	127	86	68	39	57	17
Prostitution	363	340	171	332	258	265	264	169	181	194	66
Patronizing a Prostitute	79	135	110	144	87	112	128	81	109	115	104
TOTAL	498	542	332	554	429	504	478	318	329	366	187

* through July 21, 2011

These numbers reflect the three most commonly charged prostitution-related offenses. These are just misdemeanors and do not reflect the repeat offenses, which can raise the charges to felonies. Although the total number of arrests in the past decade has decreased, police believe the number of prostitutes has increased. In addition, the resources allocated to tackling prostitution has declined. A decade ago there were two vice teams with six detectives each; now there is one team, with a rotating roster of three to four detectives and a sergeant. Additionally, not all arrests result in charges.

Thompson.

Compare that to the 20 to 30 new women who appear each day on backpage.com.

Data for prostitution-related misdemeanors handled

in Metro Court have ranged widely in the past decade, but, every year, there are between 300 and 500 cases.

The number has dropped in recent years.

However, the number of arrests the vice unit makes isn't always tied to what detectives see on a daily basis. For example, an operation to arrest an Internet prostitute

takes considerably more time than an operation to arrest one found walking the street, Thompson said.

And resources for tackling prostitution cases have dropped.

Southwest Companions

This year, detectives have spent a majority of their time investigating all aspects of Southwest Companions, the online prostitution ring that led to the charges against Garcia. Only a handful of arrests have been made in that case, but police expect many others.

Garcia is a respected professor and political analyst who served as president of UNM in 2002 and 2003.

He faces charges of promoting prostitution, conspiracy and tampering with evidence, and is accused of acting as a moderator and helping to run "Southwest Companions," a secret website used to set men up with prostitutes while avoiding law enforcement.

"Southwest Companions" has been the unit's biggest bust in years, Thompson said. The months-long, meticulous investigation is ongoing, but police believe thousands of men used the site to find prostitutes.

One reason police can't estimate the number of prostitutes working in Albuquerque is that many of them are transients.

But police are increasingly coming across younger, more vulnerable girls often tricked into prostitution by pimps who find them online at social net-

working sites.

A majority of girls who are online-based have pimps, and most of the pimps find them by answering their ads, Thompson said.

Detectives recently came across a classic example of how online prostitution works in Albuquerque.

A detective trolling backpage.com saw an ad featuring a girl who appeared to be a minor, according to a criminal complaint. An undercover detective contacted her and met her at the Ambassador Inn on Candelaria near Interstate 25, the complaint states.

When the detective arrived, he spotted a man leaving the girl's hotel room. The detective continued to the room, where he solicited sex from the girl. The two made their date official — \$180 for an hour of sex — and the detective signaled his colleagues to make the arrest for prostitution.

The girl, who used the pseudonym "Kate," turned out to be 17 years old. The girl would not name the man who was initially spotted leaving her room, but it turned out to be her pimp, Dante McKay, police say.

McKay had driven the girl to the hotel, police said. He was arrested and charged with promoting prostitution, human trafficking and tampering with evidence.

Murdoch allegations

When a vice detective two weeks ago interviewed a prostitute shown in a video having sex with Judge Murdoch, the detective, not the prostitute, alleged that the prostitute had been raped.

Murdoch, the top criminal court judge in Albuquerque for many years, has denied any wrongdoing. One of his attorneys said Murdoch was "confident that he will be vindicated once the issues surrounding this case are fully examined and decided." The judge stepped down from the bench after 26 years on Friday.

The rape investigation began on July 18, when a confidential informant told detectives about a video of Murdoch having sex with a prostitute, according to a criminal complaint.

APD — through the informant — purchased the video for \$400. The woman, who is from Arizona and was in Albuquerque temporarily, later told police she had been solicited by Murdoch on backpage.com and went to his house about eight times.

She told police that, during their first encounter, Murdoch insisted on performing oral sex without her consent.

Police have charged him with rape and intimidating a witness. The prostitute is under investigation in connection with extortion because police believe she might have been trying to sell the video.

Trying To Survive

By Astrid Galvan
Journal Staff Writer

When Lou started running out of options for staying economically afloat, prostitution seemed like the safest thing to do.

A prostitute off and on since 2008, Lou said she already had an extensive criminal history that included robbery and shoplifting charges. If she got caught committing one of those crimes again, she said, she would have to do hard time. Being on the streets making quick money would surely be faster than jail, she said.

"It's something that was fast cash. I thought it would be safer than other criminal acts," she said in a recent interview with the Journal.

Her logic failed. "I've been pistol-whipped, raped, beaten and dumped, gotten thrown out in the middle of nowhere, (had a) knife put to my throat," Lou said, holding back tears.

"I've been pistol-whipped, raped, beaten and dumped, gotten thrown out in the middle of nowhere, (had a) knife put to my throat."

"LOU," A PROSTITUTE SINCE 2008



GREG SORBER/JOURNAL

"Lou" was handcuffed after falling for a prostitution sting along Central Avenue on Wednesday. Police said she agreed to exchange sex for money.

A Dangerous Life

By Astrid Galvan
Journal Staff Writer

Whether a woman works the prostitution trade on the street or on the Internet, she is vulnerable to rape and violence and often doesn't report the crimes.

The average lifespan for a prostitute is 34 years, according to a study in the American Journal of Epidemiology.

The study, based on data collected on prostitutes in Colorado Springs, Colo., from 1967 to 1999, also showed the leading cause of death for prostitutes is homicide. Prostitutes are almost 18 times more likely to be murdered than other women of similar age and race, the study found.

A stark reminder is the tragic deaths of 11 young women whose bodies were found in early 2009 buried on the West Mesa, many of whom led a transient life that involved drugs and prostitution. Police continue to seek the serial killer responsible for their deaths.

As for rape, a 1998 study by Prostitution Research and Education, a San Francisco-based nonprofit, found that about 68 percent of prostitutes had been raped — or forced to perform a sex act they hadn't agreed to — while on the job;

some experts place that number closer to 80 percent.

Women who base their business online tend to be younger than streetwalkers and tend to make more money, APD Sgt. Matt Thompson said.

While a majority of streetwalkers are "profound" drug addicts, only about half of Internet prostitutes use drugs, he said. And streetwalkers tend to use harder drugs such as methamphetamine, heroin and crack cocaine.

On any given day, a prostitute on Central might charge \$20 to \$60 for sex. Prostitutes based on the Internet, especially those associated with rings like Southwest Companions, make hundreds of dollars or more.

Thompson said it is common for prostitutes not to 11 they were raped because of the nature of their job and because they often have a long history of abuse.

"I think unfortunately a lot of times the girls, their histories are nothing short of awful. Being sexually abused as a child is not uncommon. Abuse has been a part of their lives for a long time," Thompson said. "They don't see themselves as being worthy of making that claim."