

Child sexual abuse in New York City religious institutions

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Child sexual abuse in New York City religious institutions has presaged or echoed that which has occurred and emerged elsewhere in the United States and Europe. The cases documented here, so far, reach back to the 1970s but have mostly come to light since 1990.

This is a listing, and account, of notable cases; it is not necessarily a complete listing:

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Two 2011 basketball-program cases

Two cases in 2011 – those of Bob Oliva and Ernie Lorch – have both centered in highly ranked NYC youth basketball programs sponsored by churches of different denominations. Both cases have also moved to a criminal stage due to actions which have been alleged to, or admitted to, have happened in Massachusetts. As with many abuse cases, the fairly recent accusations addressed events which happened many years ago. However, Massachusetts law froze the statute of limitations when the victims left that state and allowed the cases, thence, to be brought many years later. In the open case – Lorch's – the statute of limitations provision is being challenged in court.

Brooklyn and Queens

Bob Oliva, Christ The King Regional High School and Catholic Youth Organization

In early 2011, long-time basketball coach at Christ The King Regional High School Bob Oliva was accused of two cases of child sexual abuse.^[1] He pled guilty under a plea deal to one of them, brought in Massachusetts on behalf of former player. Oliva cannot coach any longer and he will have to wear a monitoring device to track his movements while he serves five years' probation.^[1]

Manhattan

Bruce Ritter, Covenant House

Main articles: Bruce Ritter and Covenant House#Scandal

Father Bruce Ritter, founder of Covenant House in New York City, was forced to resign in 1990 after accusations that he had engaged in financial improprieties and had engaged in sexual relations with several youth in the care of the charity.^[2]

Ernie Lorch, Riverside Hawks and NYC Metro Hawks

Ernie Lorch, a Middlebury College basketball player, was from 1961 the founding coach of the Riverside Hawks youth basketball team sponsored by the Riverside Church.^[3] The church is interdenominational (American Baptist and United Church of Christ) and located on the Upper West Side. Lorch resigned after charges of child sexual abuse were leveled and District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau began investigating in 2002.^[4]

Under the "frozen statute of limitations" provision, Lorch was arrested by a fugitive task force in 2010 at a convalescent home in Ardsley, New York, said U.S. Marshal Daniel Spellacy in Springfield, Mass. Lorch was "accused of sexually abusing the then-17-year-old victim when his Riverside Hawks team traveled from Manhattan to the University of Massachusetts in Amherst for a tournament between March 1977 and April 1978. Lorch also tried to rape the player, the indictment said."^[5] As of March, 2011, Lorch's attorney was asserting his client suffered from dementia and diabetes and was wheelchair-bound; and the lawyer was effecting other efforts to prevent extradition, including *habeas corpus* and a challenge to the "frozen statute of limitations" provision.^[6]

References

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- ³ ^{Toperoff}, Sam, "A Pillar And Backboard Of The Riverside Church" (<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1065688/index.htm>) , *Sports Illustrated*, December 22, 1986. Retrieved 2011-04-05.
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- ⁵ ^{"Prominent NY youth coach arrested"} (<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncaa/highschool/news/story?id=5764949>) , *Associated Press* via ESPN, updated November 4, 2010 4:20 PM EST. Retrieved 2011-04-05.
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See also

- Abuse
- Child abuse
- Religious abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual misconduct
- Spiritual abuse

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