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She Dialed 911. The Cop Who Came to Help Raped Her.

A young woman in Milwaukee called the cops when someone threw a brick through her window. One of the cops who came to help raped her.

by [Michael Daly \(/contributors/michael-daly.html\)](/contributors/michael-daly.html) | January 29, 2012 4:45 AM EST

When the brick crashed through her bathroom window and somebody began kicking in her front door, the 19-year-old single mother of two in Milwaukee dialed what are [supposed to be the most trustworthy three numbers \(/articles/2011/11/10/nypd-scandals-obscure-the-decency-of-the-majority-cops-say.html\)](/articles/2011/11/10/nypd-scandals-obscure-the-decency-of-the-majority-cops-say.html).

“I called 911 for help,” she later said in court. “I didn’t call 911 to be the victim.”

Within minutes, two police officers responded. One took her 15-year-old brother outside to speak to him. The other cop, Police Officer Ladmarald Cates, gave her boyfriend \$10 and told him to go the store and get some water. She told him that he was welcome to chilled water from her refrigerator.

“I only drink bottled water,” Cates said.

Her boyfriend has a pronounced limp and set off with no promise of returning soon. Cates asked to see the broken window and she led him down a narrow hallway to a bathroom in the back. She felt sure that jealous neighbors had attacked her happy home because she dared to defy what seemed surely to be her fate as an inner-city teenage single mom.

“I wanted to be a good example to my kids,” she would later say. “I wanted to learn something, be somebody.”

She had returned to high school as a mother of two and after graduation she had continued on to the University of Wisconsin, where she was studying criminal justice with the thought of becoming police officer or a lawyer.

Should the race of the victim matter? Mike Daly responds to user comments.

“I thought I was going pretty good,” she would recall.

She now stood on a floor littered with broken glass and pointed to the brick. The cop she had summoned to protect her instead chose this moment to grab the back of her head by her hair and sodomize her. Then he raped her.

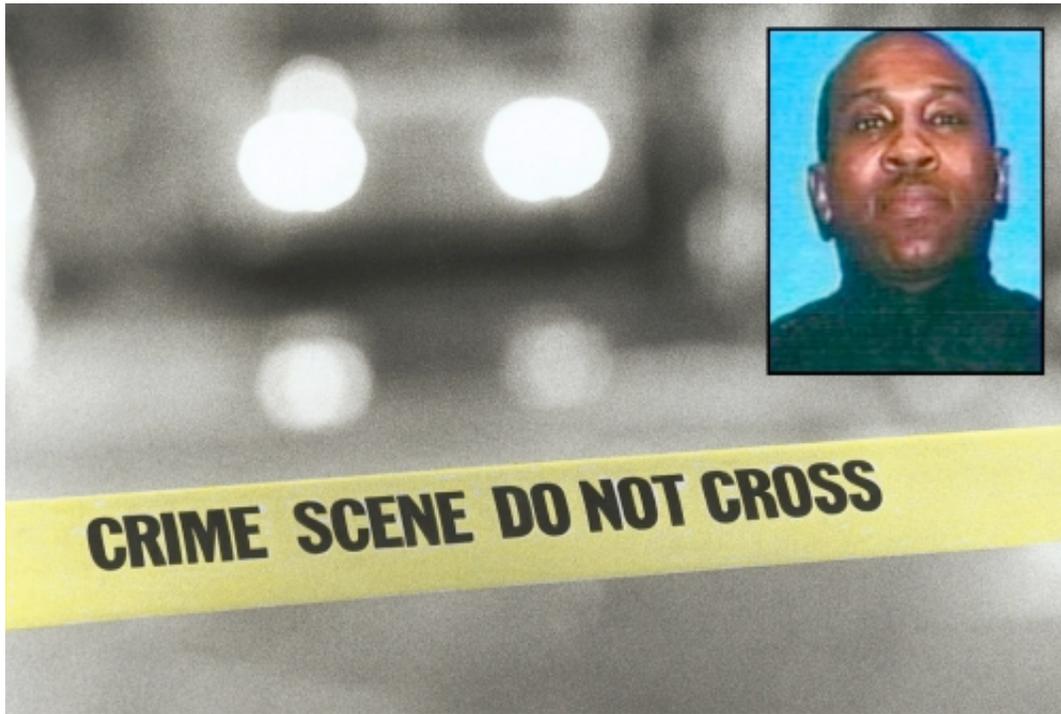
Her revulsion in the aftermath was so visceral that she vomited as she ran outside. The cop’s partner had become concerned when he did not immediately see Cates and called for back-up. Other cops began arriving and saw a woman screaming incoherently about being raped.

Cates appeared and grabbed her by the waist, spinning her around. Her swinging feet may or may not have struck the partner. She was handcuffed and taken in, told at the stationhouse that she was being charged with assaulting a police officer.

She became more coherent but no less outraged and vocal as she continued cry out from a holding cell that she had been raped. She also continued to vomit. The other cops dismissed her as a liar.

After 12 hours, she was interviewed by internal affairs and taken to a hospital, where a rape kit was used to collect evidence. She was then taken to the county jail and held for four days before being released without actually being charged.

She took her story to the Milwaukee District Attorney’s office. A prosecutor subsequently wrote, “While I did find the victim’s version of events credible, I did not believe that her testimony would be strong enough to successfully prosecute Officer Cates.”



Milwaukee police officer Lamarald Cates is charged with rape., Jonathan A. Meyers / Newscom

In other words, Cates was still a cop and she was still an inner-city teenage single mom. She stopped going to school as she fell into a deep depression, making two serious suicide attempts.

["It was killing my soul," she says \(http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/09/nyregion/ex-officer-sentenced-in-east-village-rape-case.html\)](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/09/nyregion/ex-officer-sentenced-in-east-village-rape-case.html).

She who had so desperately wanted to be a good example for her 3-year-old boy and 2-year-old girl began to wonder if they should even be with her.

"Sad and crying all the time," she says. "I didn't know if I wanted my kids around, me being upset like that about something that happened to me."

Meanwhile, internal affairs confronted Cates with DNA evidence linking him and the victim. He told three different stories, finally saying there had been a voluntary sexual encounter. His victim read in the newspaper that he had been fired for lying and for "idling and loafing" on duty, words that mocked what had been done to her.

"That really pissed me off," she says.

She took some comfort in knowing Cates was not going to be answering any more 911 calls. But he still had not been held accountable for what he did to her.

"It wasn't really justice," she says. "It didn't say he hurt me."

She was sinking only deeper into despair when she went on the Internet and chanced up a photo of an eminent Milwaukee defense lawyer named Robin Shellow.

“She had a beautiful smile,” the victim recalls. “It was just her smile and the look in her eyes...She’s not mean and she’s a woman ... She looked like she could understand me...She looked like she would help.”

She went to Shellow’s office.

“I just was giving it a shot. I didn’t think nothing was going to come of it.” Shellow proved to be everything her photo suggested. Shellow also happened to have just finished a case in federal court and she had the number handy for the prosecutor who had been her opponent. Asst. U.S. Attorney Mel Johnson came to her office with an FBI agent to interview her new client. He not only found her credible, he was willing to prosecute.

“He was a very nice guy,” the victim says. “He kind of made me not afraid.”

“I knew it,” she says. “The way he treated me, I knew he had to have hurt somebody else before.”

As the case headed for trial, Gina Barton of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported that Cates had been investigated for illegal behavior on five previous occasions, three of them involving sexual misconduct. Two of those were with prisoners. The third was with a 16 year-old and that case had been referred to the Milwaukee district attorney’s office, which declined to prosecute. The priors came as no surprise to the 19-year-old who was now accusing him of raping her while he somehow remained employed as a cop.

“I knew it,” she says. “The way he treated me, I knew he had to have hurt somebody else before.”

But, the law prohibited the prosecution from using Cates’s history to sway the jury. The case was still a she-said-he-said as the victim took the stand. She had been counseled and steadied by Shellow right up to this moment. She was now on her own.

“I am here today because Officer Cates is a very bad man,” she said. [Shellow says that her client was a terrific witness \(http://www.jsonline.com/news/crime/jury-selection-begins-in-federal-trial-of-fired-officer-vf3n2s8-136939243.html\)](http://www.jsonline.com/news/crime/jury-selection-begins-in-federal-trial-of-fired-officer-vf3n2s8-136939243.html). The victim herself feels otherwise, faulting herself for not being able to convey the enormity of what happened. She does say, “It felt good to look at him and tell him what he did. He was looking at his shoes.” She also felt that whatever her shortcomings he was sure to be convicted.

“I thought it would be guilty,” she said. “I felt it in my stomach. Anybody with two eyes could see this dude was an animal.”

On January 11, [the jury convicted Cates of violating the victim’s civil rights by raping her \(http://www.jsonline.com/news/crime/federal-case-against-fired-officer-goes-to-jury-d73p0jt-137110398.html\)](http://www.jsonline.com/news/crime/federal-case-against-fired-officer-goes-to-jury-d73p0jt-137110398.html).

“I just heard the 'guilty' and then I left because I was so emotional,” she says.

She returned to court on Jan. 18, to see Cates remanded, pending sentencing in April, when he faces a maximum of life in prison.

“I didn’t feel happy,” she says. “I felt like, ‘Finally, it’s over.’”

She could not help but feel sympathy for Cates’s children.

“They didn’t do anything,” she says.

She has chosen to accept the anonymity accorded a sex crime victim as she resumes being the hero of her own particular life. She is back to being the mom she wanted to be for her own kids. And she plans on continuing her studies next semester, though she has seen enough of the legal system to have a new career goal.

“A nurse or a doctor,” she says.

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