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UNFIT FOR DUTY

SPECIAL REPORT: Accusers say he is a predator in uniform

Part 5: The Lauderhill officer was accused of repeated abuses by 7 females. Yet his word prevailed every time.

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There are five separate cases involving women who do not know each other. The mom and her two daughters. The woman who had too much to drink. The 77-year old robbery victim. The pregnant teenager. And the woman at the fish market.

They all say Lauderhill Police Officer Darrell Walker molested them.

The first accusation came a dozen years ago, the most recent in February. All have the same theme: Walker used his badge and his uniform to get close to women who trusted he was doing his job — until the moment he put his hands on them.

Of the dozens of cases reviewed during the Herald-Tribune's eight-month investigation into officer misconduct, Walker's was among the most troubling. The women filed formal complaints with Walker's employer. Detectives once arrested him because they were certain he was a predator. But in every case, it was Walker's word against someone considered less credible than a police officer. The department concluded that the allegations were "not sustained."

So he kept his badge.

Four of Walker's accusers spoke with the Herald-Tribune this year, and three agreed to be named in this story. Unless stated otherwise, the following account of the allegations against Walker comes from his own personnel file, which includes Lauderhill Police Department investigations and statements detectives took from the women at the time.

Walker initially agreed to an interview for this story but later canceled. Lauderhill Police Chief Andrew Smalling and Mayor Richard Kaplan would not comment.

The [full investigations are available online.](#)

DECEMBER 1999



STAFF PHOTO / THOMAS BENDER

Lauderhill's Police Department, in Broward County, has faced a string of sexually charged allegations involving Officer Darrell Walker. In every case the department concluded that the allegations were "not sustained."

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Brenda Strong was asleep when police came to her door at 5 a.m. It was a drug unit with warrants for three men who sometimes stayed with Strong in her Lauderhill Housing Authority apartment. Officers took the men away and left.

At 6 a.m., one of the officers came back.

Strong again answered the door in the long T-shirt she wore to bed the night before. Lauderhill Officer Darrell Walker told her he was sent back to her house because one of the arrested men said Strong was hiding drugs.

An investigation later determined that no one sent Walker back to the house and there was no tip about drugs. Walker denied ever returning.

Strong told detectives that Walker was there and demanded to search her. Strong, 31 at the time, asked to change into something more appropriate first. Walker told her no and threatened that Strong and her two daughters could be evicted and jailed if she did not cooperate.

Walker turned the woman around and stood behind her. He ran his hands along her backside and breasts. He asked if Strong's daughters — 11 and 13, also in nightgowns — might be hiding drugs. One at a time, with their mother in another room, Walker searched the girls.

On his way out the door, Walker warned them not to tell other officers he had come back.

Both girls told their mother that Walker squeezed their breasts and backside. One of the girls sobbed in her mother's arms.

"He touched me in a wrong way," the child said.

MARCH 2000

Nicole Farbman was on her way home from a bar when a police officer stopped her on Commercial Boulevard in Lauderhill. Farbman was drunk and driving with her brights on.

Walker gave her a sobriety test, which she failed. He ordered her to the back seat of his patrol car and, when she sat down, shined his flashlight down the front of her blouse. He told her he needed to search for drugs.

Farbman balked, so Walker gave her a choice: He could call a female officer to do the search, but that would mean Farbman would go to jail. Or he could do it himself.

Walker rubbed his hand along her left thigh and up the side of her breast, over her clothing. Walker told her to lift up her shirt and her bra. She started to cry.

"I don't know what you want me to do," Farbman screamed at him.

He could take her to jail, he warned.

Farbman reached into her blouse and pulled her bra out towards Walker, sobbing as he watched.

"It's your lucky night," Walker said.

He let her leave. Drunk and crying, Farbman drove home.

THE ARREST

Farbman, who was 23 at the time, filed a complaint in April 2000. Internal affairs detectives were already reviewing the allegations made by Strong and her daughters.

The stories were similar. They believed the women.

Detectives pressed prosecutors to bring a case against Walker, convinced that he had abused his authority so he could touch the women and two girls. Walker denied the allegations against him.

Internal affairs detectives normally do not make arrests, but in this case they met Walker at the Broward County Jail to serve the felony warrant themselves. City officials suspended Walker.

The arrest of a police officer made the evening news. Norma Nassau, 77 at the time, watched in her Lauderhill condo as Walker's mug shot popped onto her television screen.

"It was him," she told the Herald-Tribune. "I'll never forget his eyes."

Sixteen months earlier, she said, Walker molested her, too.

DECEMBER 1998

Three young boys ambushed Nassau one day when she was shopping at Macy's, knocking her to the ground as they snatched her purse. Shoppers discovered Nassau lying injured in the mall parking lot.

Later that day, the Lauderhill Police Department sent an officer to Nassau's condo to take a report.

Walker arrived and found Nassau in the living room with neighbors and friends fretting over her ordeal.

Walker said he needed to speak with Nassau alone, in the den. He sat her down and asked her to show him what hurt. Her ribs were badly bruised, Nassau told him, and it was too painful to lift her shirt.

He reached inside her blouse to pull her breast out of her brassiere.

One of Nassau's friends walked in, shocked: "What's going on in here?"

Nassau says she discussed the uncomfortable incident later with her friends, who urged her to report Walker.

At the time, she wondered if he had done anything wrong.

"I was so naïve," she told the newspaper. "I thought he was allowed to do that to women."

She changed her mind and reported the incident after seeing that Walker had been arrested for touching two other women.

"I just wanted them to know what he had done," she said.

THE TRIAL

Prosecutors took the Strong case to court in June 2002.

Before Walker went to trial, Lauderhill settled civil suits brought by Strong and Farbman for a total of \$236,000.

Strong's young daughters made shaky witnesses, the woman said in an interview. They were nervous and fidgeted on the stand. Their testimony sometimes contradicted earlier statements.

Meanwhile, the jury knew nothing of Walker's history.

"The defense tried to present him as a saintly person, and there was some other evidence about his background I wasn't allowed to present," said Assistant State Attorney Dennis Siegel in a 2002 story in the Sun-Sentinel.

The jury did not know that the Hollywood Police Department had fired Walker following two incidents of sexual harassment. The jury was also not told of Farbman or Nassau.

They did know Walker had been accused of something horrible by two nervous girls and a woman who let three drug suspects stay the night in her government subsidized apartment.

It was their word against his.

"And he's a cop," Strong says.

The jury acquitted Walker.

BACK WITH A BADGE

Walker took the verdict and a lawyer to the City of Lauderhill and asked for his job back.

Coming off a loss in the Strong case, the State Attorney's Office decided it would not bring criminal charges against Walker for the other two accusations.

In October 2003, Lauderhill's internal affairs detectives closed the case by ruling the cases "not sustained," meaning the allegations could be neither proven nor discredited. They cited the inconsistent testimony of Strong's daughters; the way Farbman initially denied being drunk the night she was stopped but later admitted drinking at least 10 beers; and the fact Nassau waited longer than a year to come forward.

Walker denied touching any of the women. He was reprimanded for two minor offenses: cursing and failing to file paperwork showing his daily activity.

Lauderhill sent their Walker investigation to the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, where state officials determine an appropriate punishment, if any, for officer misconduct.

But without a sustained internal affairs ruling or a guilty verdict, they had no ability

to take action against Walker's certificate.

He was reinstated to the Lauderhill police force.

APRIL 2004

After a fight with her boyfriend, an 18-year-old pregnant woman called 911 for help. Officers responded to the scene and took the boyfriend to jail.

After the other officers left, Walker came back.

He told the woman he would check in on her once in a while to make sure she was doing OK. The next day, Walker stopped by her house when he was off-duty. She invited him in.

They chatted for a bit, then Walker asked her to turn around. He said he wanted to admire her shape. He made a lewd comment about her breasts. He asked her to have sex with him.

Walker grabbed her breasts and rubbed them. The woman pulled away.

"What?" Walker asked. "You scared of me?"

A neighbor knocked on the door and came inside. Walker left.

He was at the woman's door again the next morning at 8:30, this time in uniform. The woman did not answer. She also ignored his phone calls.

When the woman's boyfriend got out of jail, Walker pulled next to him in traffic and taunted the man. On two more occasions, Walker confronted the boyfriend, once pointing his finger at the man's head and yelling: "I don't know why she with your sorry ass."

The woman told her boyfriend what had happened. She filed a formal complaint with the Lauderhill Police Department in May 2004.

Walker denied touching the woman or asking for sex. He said he was "merely checking up on her." Five months later, internal affairs cleared Walker because there were no independent witnesses.

FEBRUARY 2011

A 29-year-old woman parked in a handicapped space at a Lauderhill fish market. While inside, a friend told her she was about to get a ticket. The woman rushed out and found a Lauderhill police cruiser blocking her car.

Walker rolled down his window and beckoned for the woman to come closer. She obeyed.

He told her to lean into the window of his car. When she did, he complimented her on the tattoo on her breast. The woman snapped back and pulled her shirt close to her chest.

"I'm going to give you a break," Walker insisted. "Come closer."

The woman leaned back into Walker's car window. He ran his finger across her

chest, then reached into her shirt under her bra and fondled her breasts.

"I think they're beautiful," he told her. "Did that feel good?"

She pulled away again, walked back to her car and got inside. Her 9- and 10-year-old sons, who were waiting in the car, asked their mother why she was crying.

The woman filed a complaint. Detectives interviewed Walker, who denied touching the woman or making any lewd comments.

The woman was "not attractive whatsoever," Walker told them.

Internal affairs detectives ruled the allegations against Walker "not sustained." They cited the lack of independent witnesses to corroborate the woman's story.

The latest case contains no mention of the previous allegations. Walker's accuser had no idea there were others until told by a Herald-Tribune reporter.

She was wary at first, unsure why someone was calling to ask her about Walker.

"They didn't believe me," she said.

When told about the four other women and the two young girls, she screamed and then sobbed so hard she could not catch her breath.

"No!" she screamed. "No, no, no, no ..."

'LIVING LIKE A ZOMBIE'

Each of the women who spoke with the Herald-Tribune said her allegation was true. They are frustrated that they had not been believed and that Walker is still on the police force. His earliest accusers had been under the impression that he never got his badge back and were furious to hear about the most recent case.

The woman in the 2011 case has struggled to cope with what happened in the months since.

She lives close to the fish market where she encountered Walker and said she is afraid she will see him again. She worries about her children, who walk home from school every day.

She said she has trouble sleeping. At night, she pushes couches in front of the doors and sits awake in the living room.

"I'm living in my house like a zombie," she said.

Strong, meanwhile, still simmers with anger at the mention of Walker's name.

She said her own relationship with her husband cooled because she was afraid to be intimate. He once came up behind her to give her a hug and Strong recoiled.

"I couldn't even hug my husband," she said.

During an August interview at the Lauderhill Middle School, where a youth football league practiced at the school's field, Strong pointed out her grandson.

"Tall one there," she said.

Strong said when her grandson was born, her daughter had to be sedated because she was so afraid of the doctor touching her.

"Even if I'm 90 years old, if I have breath in my body, I better not see that man again," Strong said of Walker.

Like Strong, it had been more than a decade since Farbman's encounter with Walker. But as she recounted the incident, Farbman fidgeted in her chair and her hands started to shake.

She had assumed Walker's badge had been taken away forever — after all, the city paid a settlement. Farbman had moved on with her life.

She did not like learning that Walker was allowed to move on with his career.

"How can that guy still be a cop?" she asked. "How can they let him do this to other women?"

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