

Oakland police scandal: Prostitute who sued city recounts story of forced sex

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2016 Oakland Cops rape another sex worker

OAKLAND -- "What could you do for us?"

Rory Keller-Dean, who was trying to keep her boyfriend's car from being impounded, said former Oakland police Officer Gary Romero asked her that question before driving her out to Coast Guard Island in Alameda. Behind a shed, Keller-Dean, a young prostitute at the time, claimed she was forced to perform oral sex on Romero and six other Oakland officers.

"I thought I was gonna be dead. I thought they were gonna kill me," Keller-Dean said, tearing up as she recalled the events in a recent interview. "But then he hands me the keys to the Cadillac and tells me goodbye and not to say a damn thing."



Rory Keller-Dean is photographed on Thursday, June 30, 2016, in Oakland, Calif.

Keller-Dean, who sued and was awarded \$350,000 by the city, said that night in 1997 started two years of forced sex with Romero while he was on duty. In 2002, after the settlement, then Deputy City Attorney Barbara Parker said the city's internal investigation corroborated many of Keller-Dean's claims. Romero denied the allegations throughout, calling the sex consensual.

Although she has tried to put her past behind her, Keller-Dean decided to share her story to support Celeste Guap, the teen at the center of a sex

misconduct scandal involving Oakland police and other law enforcement agencies. Guap, 18, who portrays herself as a sex worker, alleges she had sex with 30 law enforcement officers, including several while she was underage.

"It's been bottled up the past 18 years. When I see what was happening, I felt like I needed to say something," Keller-Dean said. "I don't know the girl, but I pray for her. I believe her 100 percent."

Keller-Dean, now 47, sat on an Oakland park bench Thursday and shared her story -- one that has taken a toll on the woman who has left the street life behind but can't escape the memories.

She has lost relationships with her children, and 15 years of psychotherapy has not helped much, she said.

After the initial assault by Romero and others, she said, she would work her normal corners on International Boulevard, get into cars that would pull up, only to find Romero inside.

"Every time he would see me out there, he would snatch me up," she said. "I was scared to death. He was always strapped with a gun."

She claimed Romero would threaten to take her daughter from her if she didn't comply. At times, Romero would come to her house and pay Keller-Dean's then 8-year-old daughter \$10 to leave in the middle of the night so he could have sex, she said.

"A police officer was having sex with a person while on duty and using his position to continue it," her attorney, John Burris, said. "She became a sex slave to him."

But that changed the night of Sept. 20, 1999. After Romero had sex with her in his undercover Suburban SUV, a scared Keller-Dean decided to tell someone. She backtracked to the corner of East 12th Street and Sixth Avenue, where Romero threw the used condom out his window, and found it on the pavement. She took it home, placed it in her freezer and called Burris the next day.

The DNA matched Romero, who had received a department award that same year for helping combat prostitution activity, and it became a key piece of evidence in the case, Burris said.

Romero -- who was fired in July 2000 for untruthfulness, failing to adhere to rules and regulations and bringing the department into disrepute -- denied the allegations at the time.

"It was a consensual relationship they engaged in, and she collected his condom and decided to cash in on it," Romero's attorney, Alison Berry Wilkinson, said.

The district attorney declined to prosecute Romero. "They couldn't prove that it was illegal on his part," Wilkinson said, adding that the oral sex claim with multiple officers never had "any evidence to support it."

"If they were true, I'd be in jail right now," Romero told the San Francisco Chronicle in a 2002 interview.

The lack of criminal charges still bothers Keller-Dean.

"It could have made it a lot better. It could have made it a lot easier," she said. "They never do. They get slapped on the hand and sent home."

Staff writer David DeBolt contributed to this report. Contact Matthias Gafni at 925-952-5026. Follow him at [Twitter.com/mgafni](https://twitter.com/mgafni).