

ST. PAUL

Jury convicts St. Paul man of using 7 victims in sex-trafficking ring

Defendant is the eighth person convicted of that crime in past 31 months.

By Paul Walsh (<http://www.startribune.com/paul-walsh/10646171/>) Star Tribune |

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Jurors have convicted a 35-year-old St. Paul man of recruiting for his sex-trafficking ring at least seven girls and women, one of whom turned him in after she was beaten and left at a hospital.

Rashad R. Ivy was found guilty Tuesday of four counts of sex trafficking, three counts of soliciting prostitution and one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Ivy will be sentenced in Ramsey County District Court on May 20, when “aggravating factors” could impact the punishment he is given. The jury found those factors to be that he was the mastermind of the trafficking ring that served dozens of men from across the Twin Cities.

“Unfortunately, the facts of this case are all too common in sex-trafficking situations,” County Attorney John Choi said in a statement issued after the verdicts were reached. “Unlike the movies, it’s often not brutal kidnapping like in ‘Taken’ or consensual and victimless as depicted in ‘Pretty Woman.’ It’s about vulnerable women and girls being tricked, exploited and sold for sex by ruthless traffickers to complicit men in our community.”

In the past 31 months, Ivy is the eighth person convicted in the county by a jury for sex trafficking girls and women.

Choi said that this intensified focus in his county “has been made possible by our victim-centered approach to properly identifying and helping victims, a commitment to advanced police and prosecutor training, victims courageously sharing their stories in the courtroom and our dedication to holding traffickers accountable to the fullest extent of the law.”

According to the criminal complaint against Ivy:

Ivy and co-defendants Tarris Trapps and Danika Johnson recruited women in St. Paul for the sex-trafficking business with promises of “making money, getting new cars and living the dream.”

Typically, Ivy and Trapps would roll up in a rented SUV, tell the women how attractive they were and lure them to their apartment. Once there, the men and Johnson would persuade them to enter into their sex-trade business using a combination of enticements, coercion and physical violence. The standard line began with talk of music videos but quickly turned to prostitution once they had the women back at their apartment.

In one case, after repeated pleadings on a St. Paul street corner, two of Ivy’s victims agreed to get in the duo’s car. Once back at the apartment, both reported they were sexually assaulted by Ivy and Trapps before fleeing.

Ivy talked a 23-year-old woman into the business in June 2015, signing her up on backpage.com and localescortpages.com as “Monica” and “Jazzmine.”

After the woman and her 3-year-old son moved into a Jackson Street apartment with Ivy, he used “her small child as hostage to compel cooperation,” the complaint read. Specifically, she could not return to the apartment from “out calls” until she made at least \$1,000.

Her ordeal came to an end after Ivy beat her so badly that she needed medical attention. Ivy dropped her off at United Hospital in St. Paul, and he instructed her to tell medical personnel that she had been in a car accident and her pain was a “25” on a 1-to-10 scale.

The woman reported the abuse to hospital staff and police, who arrested Ivy nearby.

Trapps pleaded guilty Jan. 25 to sex trafficking and soliciting prostitution. His sentencing is scheduled for May 23. Johnson pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit sex trafficking on Nov. 11. She was sentenced on Feb. 5 to a year in the county workhouse.

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