

The Forgotten Four: Five Years Later

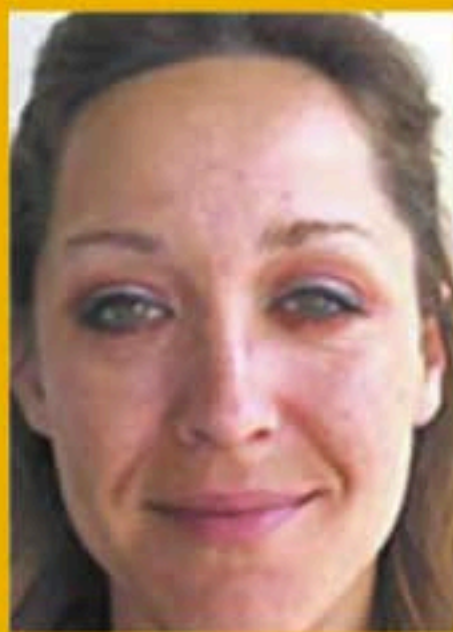
Five years after four women were brutally murdered in a heinous crime that remains unsolved, invisible lives, invisible deaths, and the underbelly of America's favorite seaside playground is explored...

BY DANIELLE DAVIES

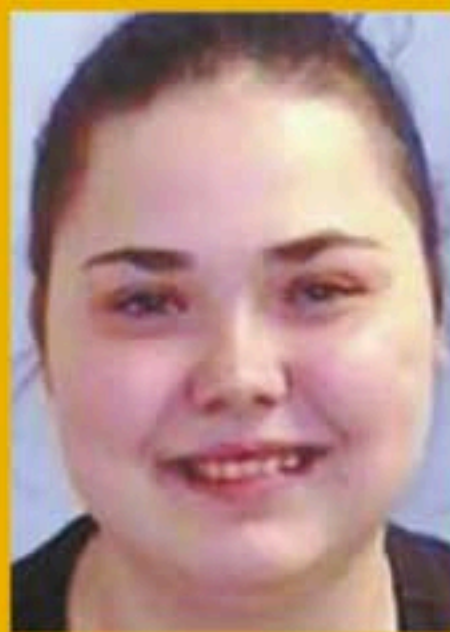
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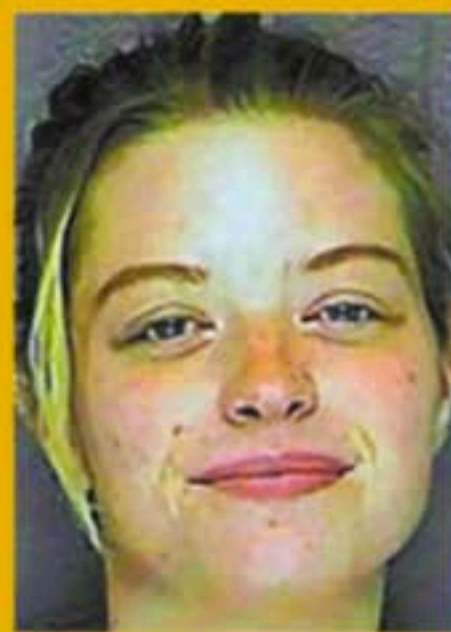
Barbara Breidor



Kim Raffo



Molly Jean Dilts



Tracy Ann Roberts

DO NOT CROSS

With community revitalization initiatives, the always-fun casinos, and a fantastic shopping destination at The Walk, Atlantic City is striving to put their best face forward. But it's not all fun and games in this city that's "always turned on." There is a dark underbelly to America's Playground that cannot be denied, no matter how many shimmering neon lights surround it.

According to data from NeighborhoodScout.com, Atlantic City boasts one of the highest crime rates in the country when compared to other cities of the same size. According to the site, "few other communities of this size have a crime rate as high as Atlantic City." It's something to think about as you're loading up on sweaters at J.Crew.

In fact, one of the most notorious crimes associated with Atlantic City in modern history remains unsolved. Five years ago, the bodies of four women were found behind the Golden Key Motel, a shabby establishment located

The Forgotten Four

The four women — Kim Raffo, Barbara Breidor, Molly Jean Dilts, and Tracy Ann Roberts — were all mothers and left behind a total of five children. All were found with their socks and shoes removed, face down in a ditch, with their heads pointed towards Atlantic City. The women ranged in age from 20 to 42, and, while they were discovered in the same ditch — approximately 60 feet apart from one another according to information from *America's Most Wanted* — they were murdered over the course of a few weeks. Some of their bodies were so badly decomposed when they were found that it was hard to get an exact date of death for them. Their children have all spent the past five years without their mothers, and no one can tell them who killed their moms or why.

These four women weren't heading up the PTA or arranging dance lessons for their daughters. They were all prostitutes living on the brink of society, having fallen so hard from the lives their loved ones dreamed for them that they truly couldn't get back up. They were women who made bad choices and who fell victim, for whatever reason, to the lure of society's underbelly; drugs and alcohol. But, surely

it didn't start out that way. No one ever

wakes up and decides they want to be so addicted to drugs that they'd rather sell their body than feed their baby. But it happens. And it happened to these four women long before a murderer gave them their deaths in common. All four women found their way to Atlantic City through an unfortunate series of events that started with drug or alcohol addiction, and ended in murder. Their killer is still free. Should it matter that all four women were prostitutes?

It shouldn't. But unfortunately, it probably does.

While considered the "oldest profession", prostitution is illegal, morally frowned upon, and downright dangerous. Prostitutes are on their own, living without paychecks, healthcare, or even police protection. While police crack down on illegal prostitution via prostitute "sweeps" — a method of identifying prostitutes via undercover officers posing as customers or "johns" — and reverse prostitute sweeps, where officers arrest the customers, these methods serve to deter women from prostitution, not to protect them. Add to this the fact that their jobs offer them little in terms of credibility — *The Boardwalk Journal* publisher and attorney James Leonard Jr. even referred to prostitute Denise Hill, when she contributed testimony to this case, as "the very definition of reasonable doubt" — and prostitutes are easy prey.

According to CNN.com, when the Green River Killer, Gary Leon Ridgway — a serial killer who murdered over 46 prostitutes — was being prosecuted, Ridgway said he targeted prostitutes, "because I thought I could kill as many as I wanted without getting caught." And therein lies the biggest of the problems. Each of the Atlantic City victims were already missing from lives where people kept track of them. It wasn't surprising for any of them to disappear for a few days. In fact, only two of the four victims were even reported missing by the

time their bodies were found.

The life of a prostitute is often overlooked by the rest of society, and their deaths are no exception. At no time during my research of this case did I come across a single offer of a reward for information leading to the killer. And, while there have been leads and speculation, and police initially questioned several suspects — most notable of all being Terry Oleson — no arrests have ever been made.

"Terry Oleson was an innocent man and we proved that," said Leonard. "But, what I would like to know is where is the press conference from the prosecutor on this case asking the public for help, where is the reward? These women have been forgotten and that is every bit as tragic as their murders."

At one point, the Atlantic City case has been linked to other well-known prostitute cases. Prior to the discovery of the murdered prostitutes in Atlantic City, there were another set of murdered prostitutes discovered in Atlantic City earlier in 2006.

Veronica Fields and Karen Luongo were each found in their homes with their throats slashed. A third, undisclosed victim, survived a similar attack. While officials denied that this attacker is the same person responsible for the murders of Raffo, Dilts, Breidor, and Roberts, the fact that six prostitutes were murdered within a few miles and months of one another is cause for speculation.

Another case that seemed connected happened thousands of miles away. Between October 30 and December 10, 2006, five

prostitutes were found murdered in Ipswich, England. Two of the women were confirmed to have been asphyxiated. In December 2006, Ipswich officials began to eye Atlantic City for possible links to the murders. However, besides the victims being prostitutes and some similar causes of death, the cases were found to be unrelated, and the "Ipswich Killer", Steven Gerald James Wright was convicted of the murder of the five Ipswich prostitutes in February of 2008.

The most compelling similar case is that of the Long Island Serial Killer. While this case initially began with the search for a missing prostitute, 24-year-old Shannon Gilbert, it led to the gruesome discovery of four female prostitutes who had been murdered and placed in burlap bags on the coast of Gilgo Beach in Long Island. All of the women, who had advertised services on Craigslist, had been strangled. There was immediate speculation that the case was related to the Atlantic City case. While officials deny that there is a connection due to the discovery of several more corpses — including those of a man and a small child — others are not so sure that at least the first four bodies found in Long Island aren't the work of the Atlantic City killer.

Hugh Auslander, widow of Atlantic City victim Kim Raffo, is in touch with some of the families related to the deceased women in Atlantic City, as well as Long Island. They are all desperate for answers and for closure, and they see a connection between these two sets of murdered women.

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"There was a cluster of four girls in Atlantic City and then another cluster of four girls in Long Island," Auslander explained. Auslander also finds the timeline to be eerily telling. By all accounts, the murders in Long Island were spread out between the mid to late 1990s up to 2010. The only year there are no connected missing persons reported or found murdered in Long Island is in 2006, the year of the Atlantic City murders.


An additional twist to the Atlantic City and Long Island murders is, strangely, the developments have made it on the social media web site Facebook. Although their bodies were found years ago in some cases, online "profiles" have recently been established for each of the four Atlantic City victims, as well as Amber Lynn Costello, one of the Long Island victims. The profiles of each of the women is sparse, but all of the Atlantic City victims are Facebook "friends" with each other, and all feature a link to the memorial page of Anne Marie Fahey, an Atlantic city woman who was found slain in 1996 by her lawyer boyfriend. The profile of Molly Jean Dilts also shows that she is "friends" with Amber Lynn Costello, a Long Island victim, in addition to the other Atlantic City victims. Dilts is the only Facebook connection to the Long Island victims. While the connection between the profiles and a murderer is unlikely, it is another example of someone seeing the ties to the two sets of murders.

Finally, there is the disturbing case of convicted killer Steven Hayes. Hayes was sentenced to death on November 8, 2010 for the brutal 2007 triple murder of Jennifer Hawke-Petit and her two daughters in Connecticut. While Hayes worked with an accomplice, Joshua Komisarjevsky, in the attack on the Petit family, there is speculation that those murders were not his first. In letters confiscated by prison officials, Hayes, writing to an unidentified woman known as

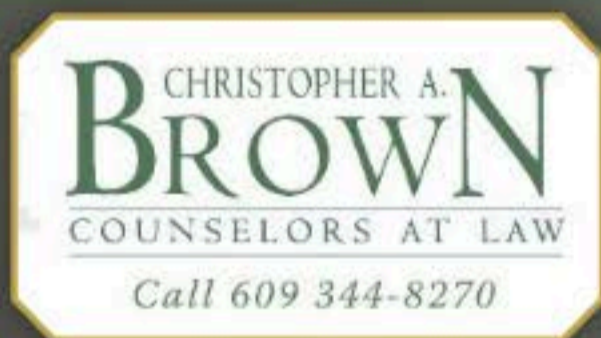
"Lynn", brags that he had killed before. According to a letter leaked to the *New Haven Register*, Hayes boasts in detail about killing 17 people. How does this relate to the Atlantic City murders? In each of the purported killings committed by Hayes, he admits to collecting trophies. His trophies of choice: shoes.

According to the *New Haven Register*, in the Petit murder trial, "it was revealed Hayes has a sexual attraction to women's shoes, and collected them." This hasn't gone unnoticed by Hugh Auslander. While he is not kept apprised of the investigation of his wife's murder by officials, Auslander, nevertheless, remains active in online communities of family members and others like him who study the case on their own. According to Auslander, the mention of 17 deaths by Hayes fits perfectly into his Atlantic City/Long Island theory of a single killer.

"Three could be the Petit family, ten the Long Island victims, and four from Atlantic City (for a total of 17)", explained Auslander, who definitely thinks Hayes' admission is worth looking into. According to sources, officials have declined to say whether Hayes' purported crimes are being investigated.

Yet, all of the above theories are just that ... theories. In a case where the victims — Raffo, Dilts, Breidor, and Roberts — were almost invisible to society when they were alive, their murders have done little to change life as we know it in Atlantic City. The community knows very little more now than it did when the murders occurred five years ago. Perhaps one of the aforementioned theories will pan out, and the relatives of the victims can finally have some closure. For now, mere speculations are the only things these grieving families can cling to until this mysterious cold case is finally solved. 

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