

# Man indicted for murder after 6 years

WASHINGTON (AP) — Six years and 15,000 tips after the murder of two women near the Appalachian Trail sent a chill through prosecutors everywhere, federal prosecutors say they have the killer and will prosecute the case as a hate crime.

Darrell David Rice of Columbia, Md., was indicted for the 1996 slayings of Julianne Williams and Laura "Lollie" Winans, the Justice Department announced Wednesday. Already jailed on an unrelated kidnapping charge, Rice told authorities the women deserved to die because they were lesbian (epithets), according to prosecution documents filed in court.

The bodies of Williams, 24, of St. Cloud, Minn., and Winans, 26, of Unity, Maine, were found bound and gagged in a wooded area near the Appalachian Trail, about a half-mile off the trail, in 1996, at a creek-side campsite in Virginia's Shenandoah National Park. Their throats had been cut. Williams' parents, Tom and Patsy Williams, of St. Cloud, Minn., said, "We are grateful that a suspect has been apprehended and indicted, but our focus has been and will continue to be on the life of our daughter."

Attorney General John Ashcroft, who met with the women's families Wednesday, said the murders "should have been substantial."

"These families have suffered what Americans know all too well — that's the pain and destruction wrought by hate," Ashcroft said at the news conference. "Hatred is the enemy of justice, regardless of its source. We will not rest until justice is done for Julianne Marie Williams and for Lollie Winans."

At a federal prison in Petersburg, Va., according to court papers filed by the government, Rice said he intentionally picked women to assault "because they are more vulnerable than men."

Prosecutors also said in the papers that Rice "hates gays."

The Human Rights Campaign, a national gay and lesbian organization, praised the Justice Department. "With this indictment, the federal government has recognized the horrendous nature of this hate crime and that it should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," said political director Winnie Stachelberg.

Rice, 34, was indicted by a federal grand jury Tuesday in Charlottesville, Va., the indictment announced Wednesday in Washington.

Federal authorities had automatic jurisdiction in the case because the slayings took place on U.S. government land. A federal hate-crimes law covers crimes motivated by race and religion, but not sex or sexual orientation. An effort to add those categories failed two years ago.

The Justice Department was able to push for a hate-crimes type of indictment in this case, however, because comments Rice allegedly made in prison indicate he selected the women "because of the actual or perceived gender or sexual orientation" of his victims.

Rice was charged with four counts of capital murder.

—One count for each murder on the basis of Rice's motivation, which allows prosecutors to introduce more evidence than a straight murder charge.

—One conventional murder charge for each woman's death in case the "hate crime" charges are rejected by a jury, department officials said. Conviction on any of the charges could bring Rice the death penalty.

The murders were not Rice's first offenses against women, according to the government's court documents.

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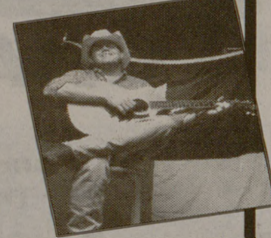
— John Ashcroft  
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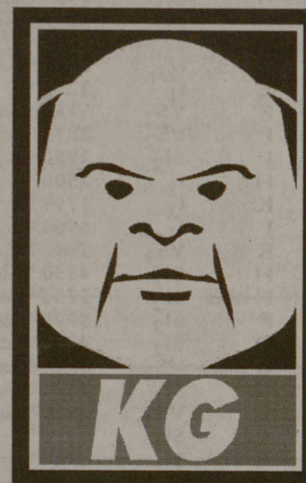
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