

LOCAL NEWS

C
SECTION

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Fremont man jailed for slavery

Teen used as sex slave, drug dealer

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HAYWARD — A Fremont man was sentenced Friday to a charge never before made in Alameda County, and only rarely in the state of California: slavery.

Kenneth Cuenca O'Neal, 27, was convicted March 3 after threatening to kill a 16-year-old girl and her mother unless the girl agreed to be his drug dealer, sex slave and centerfold.

Convicted of slavery, drug offenses, and an earlier rape, O'Neal turned around in his chair and grinned at the teen-

age victim of his crime as Judge Joseph Jay sentenced him to 23 years in state prison.

The sentencing in Alameda County Superior Court in Hayward brought a partial end to the groundbreaking case. Records searches by the prosecuting attorney and a Berkeley law professor showed that O'Neal was the first person in Bay Area history to be convicted for slavery, which was put on the books in 1901.

The victim was nearing the end of her junior year of high school May 3, 1996, when she met O'Neal and another Fremont man, Jason Carriger, in a friend's apartment, court records show.

Carriger and other men in the room passed around a crank pipe, according to court records. When it got to her, the

girl smoked the methamphetamine for the first time. It gave her a "head rush" that she didn't like, she testified in a Fremont courtroom last year.

O'Neal was adopted from a drug-addicted mother at age 1. Early in life he was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and hyperactivity. In 1988, court papers said, he was convicted of raping a 14-year-old girl who he called his slave.

Four months before the meeting, he had been fired from his job as a product manager at Vic-Tal Sales in Warm Springs for alleged sexual harassment of a female colleague.

On the first night she met O'Neal, the 16-year-old girl knew only that he didn't touch the crank pipe. Dealers never touch the stuff, he allegedly told her. But if she was interested in



TOM GALLAGHER — Staff

Kenneth O'Neal confers with his attorney during sentencing on charges of slavery Friday in Hayward Superior Court.

buying, he said, she should call his pager.

The next day, she paged O'Neal to come to her mother's apartment at The Woods apartments in Central Fremont to sell methamphetamine to a

friend.

The following afternoon of May 5, the girl was lounging by the apartment pool in her bikini when O'Neal came back. Car-

Please see **Slave**, C-2

Slave: Unusual charges result in 23-year sentence

Continued from C-1

riger and O'Neal and the girl huddled together in the side parking lot.

O'Neal and Carriger allegedly asked if she'd like to make some money selling crank for them. No one suspects a girl, Carriger told her.

The girl said no. But a knock on her first-floor window that night brought the men back into her life. They urged her to crawl out her window to meet them. Out by the mailboxes, the men allegedly told her they had chosen her to be their dealer.

If she refused, they told her they would kill her, according to court records. She would perform sexually for O'Neal and his friends. If she ran, they would find her, and Carriger would kill her mother.

O'Neal asked if she liked to model. She said no. He said he would pick her up the next day to do some "porno" modeling, the records said.

The girl was so scared that she almost didn't tell her mother about what had happened. "I was so brainwashed that I believed they would kill me if I would tell," the girl said after the sentencing.

But when O'Neal called the next evening, the girl's mother and two Fremont police officers were in the room with her. Court records said O'Neal demanded the girl call him "master" and say that she was his slave.

The girl burst into tears when she rose to address the judge before final sentencing Friday. "I've never felt so morally degraded in a situation," she said. "I don't think he regrets one thing he did and I know he'll do it again."

O'Neal stared down in his lap or shot questions to his lawyer while Judge Jay made his way through the technicalities of the sentence: 20 years on three counts of forcing a minor to sell methamphetamine, two years for slavery and an extra year because of the previous rape conviction.

Even with time off for good behavior, O'Neal will be in prison until he's at least 47, prosecuting Deputy District Attorney Matt Golde said.

Four bailiffs stood stiff around the perimeter of the room. O'Neal's wife sobbed. Their young son sat silently.

"The family has been a loving, caring, sharing family," said O'Neal's grandmother, Ivy Cuenca, after the sentencing.

Carriger was found guilty on the same charges as O'Neal except for slavery. He is scheduled to be sentenced Friday.

O'Neal joins a rare number of people in California history sentenced for slavery and perhaps the first case where the victim was a teen.

In 1985, Alan Charles Daniel tried to bribe the man who wanted to adopt his 17-month-old daughter, Fallon. Meeting with the prospective father at night under the Ventura Freeway in Los Angeles, he demanded \$90,000 for the girl. Daniel was caught, convicted and sentenced to two to four years in prison.

And a man in Lynwood tried to buy a woman's 4-year-old daughter as she escorted the toddler home from school. The man received probation in the 1992 case on condition he stay away from where children congregate.