

Megan and Candace – Casualties of *Known* Molesters

by

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In most child sexual abuse cases the abuser is someone the child knows and trusts – relatives, neighbors, coaches, teachers, ministers. And, incredibly, in too many of these cases, the abuse was preventable because the abuser was *known* by others to have molested before, but that fact was not known to those who could have protected the child.

In 1994, both Megan and Candace were sexually abused and Megan died at the hands of convicted pedophile, Jesse Timmendequas, who was “a *known* child molester.” Law enforcement knew he was a molester, but no one told seven-year-old Megan Kanka’s parents there were three convicted sex offenders living across the street from them.

Due to public outcry, one month after Megan’s rape and murder on July 29, the New Jersey legislature passed Megan's Law requiring registration and public notification of sex offenders that became federal law in 1996, and all states have passed some form of the law.

One federally funded study in 2009 determined that Megan’s law had no effect on sexual reoffenses. When informed of the study, Mrs. Kanka remarked that the purpose of the law was for parents to know where the offenders were living. “We never said it was going to stop them from reoffending.”

Jake Goldenflame, a convicted sex offender, supports the law. "Megan's Law is not there to keep me from re-offending," he said. Megan's Law is there so that *you* can keep me from re-offending by knowing who I am, *keeping your eyes on me.*"

Nine-year-old Candace Conti, began to be molested in 1994, the abuse continuing for two years. Her molester, Jonathan Kendrick, was a *known* child molester because he had been convicted by the authorities for the sexual abuse of another child two years earlier.

Kendrick's sex offender record was also *known* by the elders of the Fremont California Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, but they did nothing to protect the congregation's children, including young Candace because they kept what they knew about him secret.

They did remove Kendrick from his unpaid assistant-minister's position but no one in the congregation knew why. Here then was an example of elders following the church's national policy to keep sex abuse allegations secret. It was this silence that allowed Kendrick to abuse Candace. Because of the policy of secrecy that the church followed, information was withheld from the very people who could have prevented the abuse of Candace, and why her parents didn't know their friend and fellow congregant, Jonathan Kendrick, was a sexual predator.

In 2011, Ms. Conti, then 25, sued the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, NY, for keeping reports of child sex abusers within Jehovah's Witnesses congregations secret.

It was during the Conti trial in June 2012 that a 1989 Watchtower policy letter to elders was introduced. That letter was a major factor in determining the outcome of the trial because it stated that certain matters, including child abuse, were to be kept confidential to avoid lawsuits and financial penalties.

Also sued were three elders in the Fremont Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. Loyalty to a religious organization kept the elders from doing the right thing. In their defense these men claimed they did their duty towards Candace by "keeping an eye on Kendrick." Unlike Jake Goldenflame, the convicted sex offender, who said Megan's Law was there so people could keep an eye on him, Fremont elders did not inform parents so *they* could protect their children by keeping an eye on Kendrick.

On June 14th, Day 10 of the trial, the day after the jury awarded Ms. Conti compensatory damages of \$7M and was about to decide on punitive damages, Robert Schnack, Defendants attorney, stated in his closing arguments to the jury:

"I sincerely believe that Watchtower does not need to be punished by another monetary award. Why is that? Ms. Conti said she wanted to change policies. That's why she brought this suit. And we feel bad for Ms. Conti. But I can assure you, and I

can assure her, that Watchtower's policies continue to evolve. And I can safely say that, with her verdict yesterday, Ms. Conti has succeeded. I encourage you to award no punitive damages in this case."

The jury thought otherwise and awarded Ms. Conti \$21M in punitive damages. The Watchtower wasn't found guilty of failing to report molestation. They were guilty of negligence, malice, and child endangerment. It's obvious from the damage awards that Watchtower policies did not evolve to the degree needed to protect children and more was required.

Have Jehovah's Witnesses leaders gotten the message that parents should be told if a confessed or accused child molester is worshipping with them? Well, yes, but only if the Witnesses branch office determined the individual was a "predator"

According to a new letter to the elders, dated October 1, 2012, which updates all previous letters regarding child abuse, if the elders think someone who has been known to have sexually abused a child, although seemingly cleaned up his/her life, is a "predator," the elders must call the Witnesses branch office. If the branch office determines that an individual is to be considered a predator, then two elders are assigned to meet with the parents of minor children in order to provide a warning. Also, the "predator" should be told that parents have been discreetly informed. So, for the most part, the secrecy still remains. In Candace Conti's case, her molester would never have fit the profile of "predator"; hence, her parents would not have been warned.

Another point Defendants' Attorney Robert Schnack made in closing arguments:

"One thing I would ask you to keep in mind. The Jehovah's Witnesses Church is not the Catholic Church, that it has had verdict after verdict after verdict over the years. It's been in the press. We are all aware of it. This is the first verdict that the Jehovah's Witnesses church has faced. So, again, it is not the Catholic Church with multitudes of cases over a couple of decades."

Yes, the Conti case was "the first *verdict* that the Jehovah's Witnesses church has faced" because Watchtower leaders have been secretly settling out-of-court child sexual abuse cases for years. For example, in 2007 there were secret out-of-court settlements with sixteen victims in nine separate cases of child sexual molestation. And, as recently as May 2012, in San Diego, California, there was an out-of-court settlement of a case involving six victims of a Witness

serial molester - an elder! As is the case with many blameworthy Defendants, when Watchtower leaders settled these cases out-of-court, they acknowledged liability but not responsibility.

However, in the Conti case, this religious body refuses to acknowledge responsibility or liability that the church was to blame for Candace's molestation because on September 21, 2012, a Bond/Undertaking was posted for an appeal of judgment in behalf of Defendants Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, NY, and the North Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Fremont, California, in the amount of \$17,277,299.37. Whether the Defendants win or lose their appeal, due to the publicity surrounding the Candace Conti case, no longer is the church's policy decision to conceal *known* molesters a secret.

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Misc. media coverage involving Barbara Anderson:

<http://www.watchtowerdocuments.com/jw-media.html>

[Jehovah's Witnesses Settle Abuse Cases - Associated Press](#)

[New Evidence in Jehovah's Witnesses Allegations - MSNBC](#)

[Woman Says Church Covering Up Sexual Abuse - WSMV Nashville](#)

[Child sex-abuse activist Anderson interviewed on national TV show on church allegations - Tullahoma News and Guardian](#)

[UNADFI - French anti-cult organization covers Barbara's 2009 European Tour](#)

Videos

[Jehovah's Witnesses child sexual abuse - NBC Nightly News](#)

[JW Abuse Settlements, WTS Knew Of Molesters - NBC \(Alt\)](#)

[Church Covers Sexual Abuse - WSMTV](#)

[Growing Up With Jehovah, a Swiss TV program aired in French in November 2010 with the Andersons discussing child abuse](#)