



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 7, 2013

Kidnapped Women Found After a Decade in Captivity

A Cleveland woman who has been missing for over 10 years made the most important call of her life on Monday. "Help me. I'm Amanda Berry," she told a 911 dispatcher. "I've been kidnapped and I've been missing for 10 years and I'm, I'm here, I'm free now." Berry's phone call led police to a home in a densely populated section of Cleveland, where Berry and two other women had been held captive for a decade.



The women, identified as Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus, and Michelle Knight, were treated in the MetroHealth Emergency Department on Monday night and released on Tuesday morning.

Fox News [reported](#):

Berry disappeared at age 16 on April 21, 2003, when she called her sister to say she was getting a ride home from her job at a Burger King.

DeJesus disappeared at age 14 on her way home from school about a year later. Police said Knight vanished in 2002 and is 32 now. They didn't provide current ages for the other two women.

But they're free now and their accused captors have been arrested, thanks to Amanda and some concerned neighbors.

Charles Ramsey reportedly heard screaming and banging coming from a house and approached the door. On the other side was Amanda Berry. According to Ramsey, the door opened just wide enough to fit a hand through, but it was clear that Berry was trying desperately to get outside the house: She pleaded for help.

Another neighbor, Anna Tejeda, witnessed the entire ordeal. Tejeda explained that Berry was able to kick the screen out of the bottom of the door, allowing her to get out. Tejeda provided Berry with the phone to call the police.

Berry asked police to hurry "before he gets back," and identified her kidnapper as Ariel Castro.

Police arrested three brothers between the ages of 50 and 54. One of the men, a former school bus driver named Ariel Castro, owned the home wherein the women were held captive. Police identified the others as Pedro and O'Neal. "As far as investigations, we believe we've got three suspects," said Cleveland's deputy police chief Ed Tomba. "We're going to charge those suspects. We believe we have the people responsible."

A six-year-old girl was also found in the home and is believed to be Berry's daughter, though police have declined to say who the father was or where the child was born.

Police have not yet released information about the women's captivity, or whether they had been sexually assaulted, stating that they intend to be delicate and careful in their questioning of their women, out of respect for their trauma and the time they would need.

While investigators assert that they have no record of any tips regarding possible criminal activity at the home in the years following the women's disappearance, neighbors indicated that they had called



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the police on two specific occasions.

Neighbor Elsie Cintron, who lives three houses away from where the women were captive, said that her daughter saw a naked woman crawling on her hands and knees in the backyard years ago and called the police, but that they police had not taken it seriously.

Likewise, Israel Lugo had reportedly heard banging on the doors of Castro's home and called police in November 2011. Lugo recalls that officers knocked on the door, but heard no answer, and simply left.

Neighbors also recall seeing Castro with a little girl walking to the playground, and have seen the same little girl looking out of the attic window.

The rescue of these women is likely to bring harsh scrutiny to Cleveland police. *Newsday* reported:

Four years ago, Cleveland police came under heavy criticism following the discovery of 11 bodies in the home and backyard of a man who was later sentenced to death. The home was in a poor part of town several miles away from where the missing women were found this week.

In the wake of public outrage over the killings, a panel formed by the mayor recommended an overhaul of the city's handling of missing-person and sex crime investigations.

The recovery of the three women from Castro's home also raises issues regarding the use of the Amber Alert.

No Amber Alert had been issued on the day that DeJesus went missing after school in April 2004 because nobody had witnessed her abduction.

DeJesus's father Felix was infuriated when an Amber Alert had not been issued for his daughter. "The Amber Alert should work for any missing child," Felix DeJesus said then. "It doesn't have to be an abduction. Whether it's an abduction or a runaway, a child needs to be found. We need to change this law."

But Cleveland police contend that the Amber Alerts must be reserved for clear cases of imminent danger when the public can be of service to assist.

Investigators are celebrating the news that these women have been found alive and are in relatively good health. "For Amanda's family, for Gina's family, for Michelle's family, prayers have finally been answered. The nightmare is over," said Stephen Anthony, head of the FBI office in Cleveland. "These three young ladies have provided us with the ultimate definition of survival and perseverance. The healing can now begin."

Meanwhile, Cleveland police are asking anyone with information on the case of these missing women to call the Cleveland FBI at 216-522-1400.



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