

Rape, punishment babies' born in the

beatings and 'five sex slaves' dungeon

From **Tom Leonard** and **Daniel Bates** in Cleveland, Ohio

AN HORRIFIC account of rape, bondage and sex slaves whose pregnancies were terminated by beatings emerged yesterday after three women escaped from a house where they had been held for a decade.

Years after they vanished from the streets of Cleveland, Ohio, Amanda Berry, 26, Gina DeJesus, 23, and Michelle Knight, 32, were found in a nondescript house in the city after Amanda finally managed to sound the alarm.

Police were shocked to discover Miss Berry, who went missing a day before her 17th birthday in 2003, had a six-year-old daughter she gave birth to in captivity.

But as police questioned the women's suspected captors - brothers Ariel, Pedro and Oneil Castro - it emerged that at least four more babies may have been born inside the four-bedroom house owned by Ariel Castro.

Last night police sources said the sadistic jailers would beat the women when they became pregnant, effectively killing their unborn babies.

One of the victims is believed to have suffered as many as three miscarriages because she was so malnourished during her years in captivity.

It is not yet known what happened to any children born in the house although, perhaps ominously, investigators believe earth was recently moved in the back garden.

Investigators believe the women were kept chained from the ceiling in separate rooms in the basement and attic.

Ariel Castro's son, Anthony, revealed yesterday how his father padlocked the doors leading to his basement, attic and garage and never allowed his family inside.

'The healing can now begin'

The 31-year-old banker also disclosed how his father would hit him and once almost beat his mother to death as she recovered from brain surgery.

Insisting he knew nothing about his father's appalling secret, Anthony said as a student journalist he once even interviewed the mother of hostage Gina DeJesus for an article about her disappearance - unaware his father had her locked away in his house.

Incredibly, Ariel Castro's own daughter, Arlene, was the last person to see her friend Gina before she vanished on her way home from school in April 2004.

The hostages' terrible ordeal ended abruptly on Monday evening when Amanda Berry - last seen leaving her job at a Burger King drive-thru - screamed for help through the house's front door while Castro was out getting food at a local McDonald's.

She was helped to freedom by a neighbour who helped to knock out part of a locked screen door so Miss Berry could crawl through the gap.

She rang police from the house next door, frantically telling the operator: 'Help me! I'm Amanda Berry ... I've been kidnapped and I've been missing for ten years and I'm here. I'm free now.'

Police arrived to find Miss Berry and her child as well as Miss DeJesus, who vanished in 2003 aged 14 and Miss Knight, now 32, who went missing in 2002.

It is not known which of the three alleged captors is the father of Miss Berry's child.

The women, who were living on the same street when they were kidnapped, were taken to hospital suffering from severe dehydration and mild malnourishment.

Neighbours recalled Castro going into his house every day with a big

The naked woman seen crawling around the back yard

By **Tom Leonard**

NEIGHBOURS insist they alerted police to a naked woman crawling around the back yard of Ariel Castro's house two years ago.

One man says he also heard pounding on the doors and noticed plastic bags over the windows - but detectives simply didn't bother to investigate.

Police said they had no record of any tips or calls about criminal activity at the house in the decade after the victims vanished.

But residents in the working class area told how they repeatedly raised the alarm.

Elsie Cintron, who lives three doors away, said she had her suspicions about the house long ago but police 'didn't take it seriously' when she alerted them.

'My granddaughter told me she saw a naked lady crawling in the back yard of his house and that's when I got sick to my stomach.'

'I told my grandchildren to stay away from there.' Mrs Cintron added that she also thought it odd to see a little girl looking out of an attic window in the house.

'I told a police officer and she told me to contact a detective,' she said. 'I got discouraged and upset and let it go at that.'

Another neighbour, Israel Lugo, said he heard pounding on the doors of Castro's house, which had plastic bags on the windows, in November 2011.

He said police officers knocked on the front door, but no one answered. 'They walked to the side of the house and then left,' he said.

Police also confirmed they went to the house in 2004 after school bus driver Castro left a child on board after he returned to his depot. Again, officers left when no one answered the door.

Castro was 'interviewed extensively' but the investigation was dropped after he was cleared of any criminal intent, said Cleve-

land's mayor, Frank Johnson. According to Juan Perez, who lives two doors away from Castro's house, he and his family may have heard one of the hostages screaming several years ago.

He said his sister rang police after they heard screams, but neither of them were sure from which direction it came. 'There's a difference between a "playing around"

scream and this kind of scream,' he said. It also emerged Castro was arrested in December 1993 for domestic violence but the case was later dismissed. In the same year he was arrested for disorderly conduct and pleaded guilty.

Between 1995 and 2008 he was stopped six times by police for traffic violations but none of them resulted in officers visiting his home.

Although neither of his brothers and fellow suspects had attracted police attention, Castro's daughter was jailed for 25 years in 2008 for the attempted murder of her 11-month-old baby.

Emily Castro, 24, tried to slash her daughter Janyla's throat in 2007 after breaking up with the child's father days earlier.

Police found Miss Castro in her home in Fort Wayne, Indiana, covered in mud and blood. She told officers she tried to kill herself with the same knife she used on her baby.

Defence lawyers said she had suffered severe depression for years which spiraled into a paranoid belief that her family was trying to kill her and her baby.



Friends: Castro's daughter, Arlene, right, and kidnap victim Gina DeJesus in 2004



Suburban jail: The kidnapper's house

land's mayor, Frank Johnson. According to Juan Perez, who lives two doors away from Castro's house, he and his family may have heard one of the hostages screaming several years ago.

He said his sister rang police after they heard screams, but neither of them were sure from which direction it came. 'There's a difference between a "playing around"

scream and this kind of scream,' he said. It also emerged Castro was arrested in December 1993 for domestic violence but the case was later dismissed. In the same year he was arrested for disorderly conduct and pleaded guilty.

Between 1995 and 2008 he was stopped six times by police for traffic violations but none of them resulted in officers visiting his home.

Although neither of his brothers and fellow suspects had attracted police attention, Castro's daughter was jailed for 25 years in 2008 for the attempted murder of her 11-month-old baby.

Emily Castro, 24, tried to slash her daughter Janyla's throat in 2007 after breaking up with the child's father days earlier.

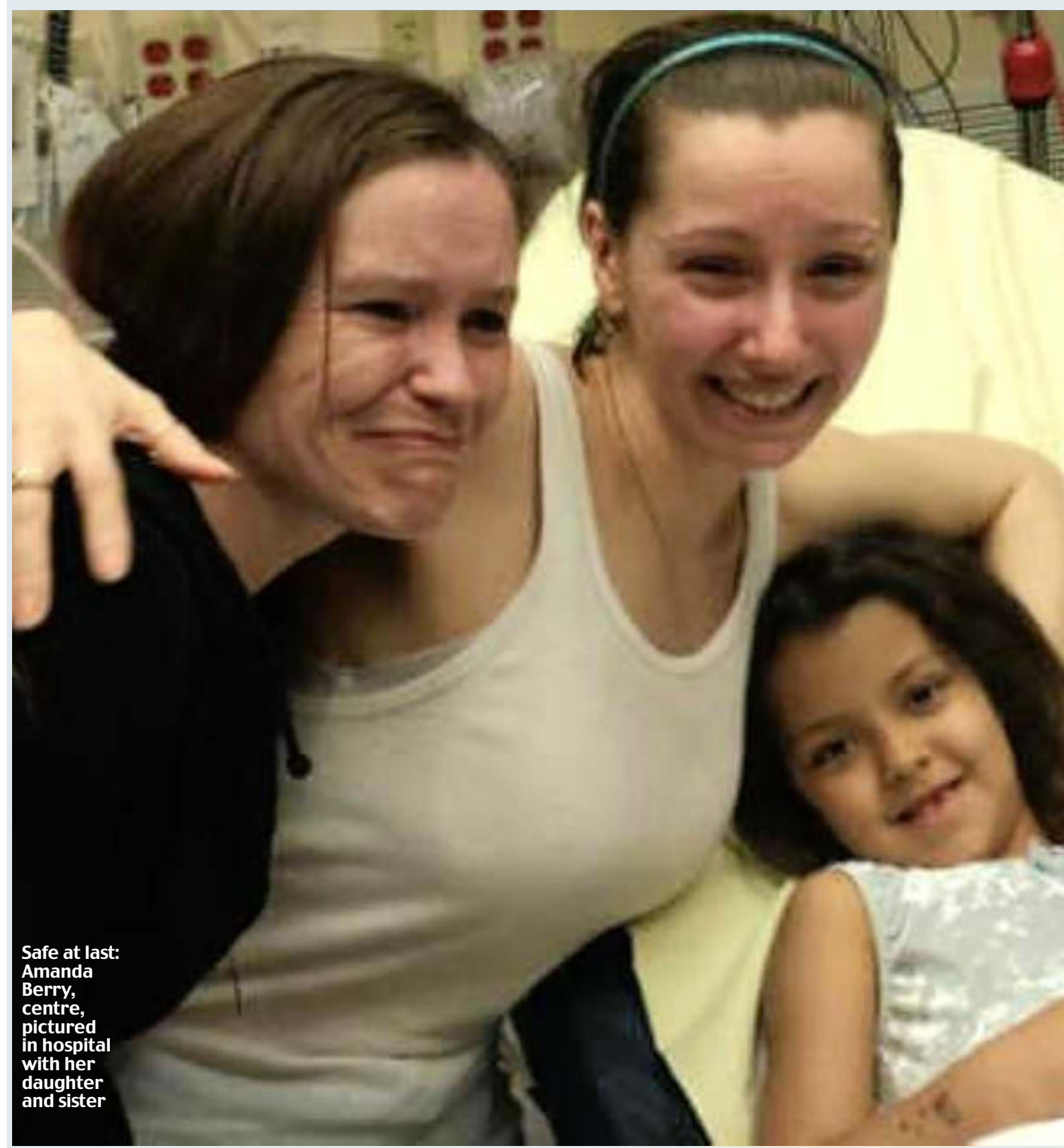
Police found Miss Castro in her home in Fort Wayne, Indiana, covered in mud and blood. She told officers she tried to kill herself with the same knife she used on her baby.

Defence lawyers said she had suffered severe depression for years which spiraled into a paranoid belief that her family was trying to kill her and her baby.

Defence lawyers said she had suffered severe depression for years which spiraled into a paranoid belief that her family was trying to kill her and her baby.

Defence lawyers said she had suffered severe depression for years which spiraled into a paranoid belief that her family was trying to kill her and her baby.

'Help me! I've been kidnapped ... missing 10 years'



Safe at last: Amanda Berry, centre, pictured in hospital with her daughter and sister

MOMENTS after Amanda Berry was freed from the house she made a frantic 911 call to the police. Here is a transcript of that call:

AMANDA BERRY: Help me. I'm Amanda Berry.

OPERATOR: You need police, fire, ambulance?

AB: I need police.

OPERATOR: OK, and what's going on there?

AB: I've been kidnapped and I've been missing for ten years, and I'm, I'm here, I'm free now.

OPERATOR: OK, and what's your address?

AB: 2207 Seymour Avenue

OPERATOR: 2207 Seymour. Looks like you're calling me from 2210.

AB: I'm across the street, I'm using the phone.

OPERATOR: OK, stay there with those neighbours. Talk to police when they get there.

AB: (Crying)

OPERATOR: We're going to send them as soon as we get a car open.

AB: No, I need them now before he gets back.

OPERATOR: All right, we're sending them, OK?

AB: OK, I mean, like ...

OPERATOR: Who's the guy you're trying - who's the guy who went out?

AB: Um, his name is Ariel Castro.

OPERATOR: OK. How old is he?

AB: He's like 52.

OPERATOR: And, uh ...

AB: I'm Amanda Berry. I've been on the news for the last ten years.

OPERATOR: I got, I got that, dear. (Unintelligible) And, you say, what was his name again?

AB: Uh, Ariel Castro.

OPERATOR: And is he white, black or Hispanic?

AB: Uh, Hispanic.

OPERATOR: What's he wearing?

AB: (AGITATED): I don't know, 'cause he's not here right now. That's why I ran away.

OPERATOR: When he left, what was he wearing?

AB: Who knows (unintelligible).

OPERATOR: The police are on their way, talk to them when they get there.

AB: Huh? I - OK.

OPERATOR: I told you they're on their way, talk to them when they get there, OK?

AB: All right, OK. Bye.

As police investigated whether Castro might have other properties, there was no word on the fate of a fourth missing girl, Ashley Summers, who disappeared from the same area in July 2007 at the age of 14.

Ashley vanished from the same tight-knit Latino neighbourhood where Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus

and Michelle Knight went missing. Detectives have long believed that the cases were linked, but there was no sign of Ashley when the three girls were finally set free from their suburban prison.

It is understood that police will be quizzing the three brothers taken into custody over the kidnapping about Ashley's disappearance.

Her family was in touch with the authorities in Cleveland yesterday to see if there was any information about the missing teenager, who would now be 20.

Ashley was initially thought to have run away after a family row, but police were called in after she never made contact.

Her grandmother claimed she saw

Ashley in a car in November 2007, with short, dyed blonde hair.

Appearing on an Oprah Winfrey show about the cases of Miss Summers, Miss Berry, and Miss DeJesus in 2009, FBI Special Agent Phil Torsney insisted there had been no legitimate sighting of Ashley since she left her house.

The FBI had speculated that the

disappearances were linked and that 'one or more of the girls may have been forced into prostitution.'

Ashley's house was about a mile and a half from where Miss Berry and Miss DeJesus went missing and three and a half miles from the house where they were found on Monday.

l.leonard@daily@mail.co.uk