

**Hugh Christopher Newsom, Jr.**, 23, and **Channon Gail Christian**, 21, were a couple from [Knoxville, Tennessee](#). They were murdered and, according to a Tennessee grand jury, both the man and woman were raped after being kidnapped early on the morning of [January 7, 2007](#). Their vehicle had been [carjacked](#).<sup>[1][2]</sup>



Five suspects have been arrested and charged in the case.<sup>[3]</sup> The grand jury [indicted](#) four of the suspects on counts of murder, robbery, kidnapping, rape and theft, while one final suspect faces federal charges as accessory after the fact to carjacking.<sup>[2]</sup>

According to news reports, Christian and Newsom had gone on a date at a local restaurant on Saturday, [January 6, 2007](#), but did not return home. During their night out, the couple was "hijacked, bound and blindfolded and taken back to Lemaricus Devall 'Slim' Davidson's rented house on Chipman Street."<sup>[4]</sup>

Christian's parents found her abandoned [Toyota 4-Runner](#) two blocks away from the Chipman Street house on Monday, with the help of her mobile phone provider. An envelope recovered from the vehicle yielded fingerprint evidence that led police to Lemaricus Davidson and 2316 Chipman Street. When police went to the address on Tuesday, [January 9](#), they found the home unoccupied and Christian's body in a trash can in the kitchen. Christian had been strangled to death.<sup>[5]</sup> According to the grand jury presentment, Christian had also been raped vaginally, orally, and anally.<sup>[2]</sup> One of the suspects, Vanessa Coleman, later told police that "she witnessed Christian's mouth being cleaned with a bottle of some type of cleaner," in an attempt to remove DNA evidence.<sup>[6]</sup> Coleman also said that she had seen "clothes that were stained with blood and smelled of gas being put in the washing machine at the house."<sup>[6]</sup> Newsom was shot three times, "his body wrapped in a blanket, set afire and dumped alongside nearby railroad tracks."<sup>[5][7]</sup> He had also been anally raped.<sup>[2]</sup>

The national [news media](#) was initially criticized by some for not giving the crime adequate coverage<sup>[4][8]</sup> because the victims were [white](#), and the suspects [black](#), but some commentators have explained that "as bad as this crime is, the apparent absence of any interest group involvement or any other 'angle' might also explain the lack of coverage."<sup>[9][10]</sup> This criticism was also fueled by erroneous reports of dismemberment, mutilations, and the duration of Christian's rapes allegedly committed by the suspects, especially in early reports.<sup>[11]</sup> Most of the original reports were later denied by the District Attorney, along with misinformation reported from a federal deputy in the arresting state of Kentucky shortly after the suspects were apprehended.<sup>[11]</sup> The crime and its lack of mainstream media coverage prompted two small demonstrations in Knoxville by [white nationalist](#) groups.<sup>[12][13] [14]</sup>

Police Chief Sterling Owen IV said that there is no indication the crimes were racially motivated, and that the murders and assault "appears to have been a random violent act."<sup>[15]</sup> "There is absolutely no proof of a hate crime," said John Gill, special counsel to

Knox County District Atty. Randy Nichols. "We know from our investigation that the people charged in this case were friends with white people, socialized with white people, dated white people. So not only is there no evidence of any racial animus, there's evidence to the contrary." <sup>[16]</sup> Some commentators, including Newsom's parents, disagree, claiming that such a crime would require a motive of racial hate. <sup>[16]</sup>

District Attorney Randy Nichols has not indicated whether or not he will seek the death penalty, but he does say the state will seek conviction for all charges filed in a 24-page indictment from the Knox County Grand Jury. <sup>[20]</sup>



Murder suspects in the case, from left: Coleman, Cobbins, Davidson, and Thomas. Boyd not pictured.

The four indicted were:

- **George Geovonni "Detroit" Thomas**, 27, faces a total of 46 charges. Thomas was indicted on 16 counts of felony murder growing out of the rape, robbery, kidnapping, and theft of Christian and Newsom, 2 counts of premeditated murder, 2 counts of especially aggravated robbery, 4 counts of especially aggravated kidnapping, 20 counts of aggravated rape, and 2 counts of theft.
- **Lemaricus Devall "Slim" Davidson**, 25, (b. [June 13, 1981](#)) faces the same 46 charges as Thomas. Davidson had also completed serving a five-year sentence in Tennessee on a previous felony conviction for carjacking and aggravated robbery on [August 5, 2006](#).
- **Letalvis "Rome" Cobbins**, 24, (b. [December 20, 1982](#)) also faces the same 46 charges as Thomas. In 2003, Cobbins was convicted of third-degree attempted robbery in New York state. He and Davidson are brothers.
- **Vanessa Coleman**, 18, was arrested by police in Lebanon, Kentucky. She faces 40 Tennessee state charges. Coleman was indicted on 12 counts of felony murder growing out of the rape, robbery, kidnapping, and theft of Christian and Newsom, 1 count of premeditated murder (of Christian only), 1 count of especially aggravated robbery (of Newsom only), 4 counts of especially aggravated kidnapping, 20 counts of aggravated rape, and 2 counts of theft.

Further, **Eric DeWayne "E" Boyd**, 34, was arrested in connection with the fatal carjacking, but only faces federal charges as an accessory after the fact for helping the

suspects get out of town. He was not indicted by the Knox County grand jury. Boyd was accused by Thomas and Cobbins of rape and murder, and a search warrant was obtained for Boyd's DNA.<sup>[21]</sup> The accusations have not resulted in charges.

"The number of counts of rape has no correlation to the number of rapes that necessarily occurred. It just outlines each and every way that a rape might be possible or might have occurred. They won't be able to convict on all of those counts but they will have a selection from those counts to choose from," Attorney Don Bosch said.<sup>[22]</sup>

The four suspects indicted in Knox County will be tried separately, at trials scheduled between May and August of 2008. Davidson has also been indicted for a second robbery which was committed after the murders. The state has not decided whether to seek the death penalty.<sup>[23]</sup>

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