

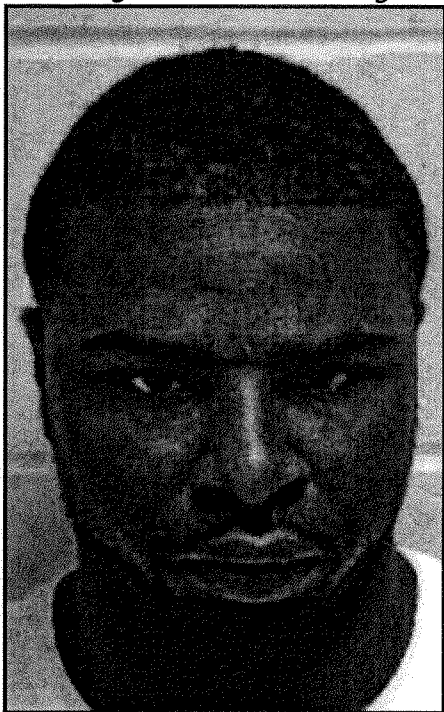
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Prosecutors to seek 15-plus years in Moorhead child pimping case

By Emily Welker on Mar 25, 2015 at 5:24 p.m.

MOORHEAD – Prosecutors said they plan to seek at least a 15-year prison sentence for a man convicted Wednesday of pimping out a 13-year-old Twin Cities runaway last summer.

A Clay County District Court jury found Prince Antonio Dequante Jones, 25, guilty of promoting the prostitution of a person under 18, a first-degree sex trafficking charge.



Prince Antonio Dequante Jones

Jones, of Brooklyn Park, had claimed he was only in Moorhead to visit family and had no knowledge that the woman with him, Eyeesha Hinton, had put an ad in Backpages.com for sex with the girl.

Both Jones and Hinton were arrested at a south Moorhead hotel on June 11 as part of a police sting.

A jury of five men and seven women found Jones not guilty on a second criminal charge accusing him of having sex with the child victim.

The girl, now 14, took the stand against Jones. So did the girl's father, who told jurors how he repeatedly called the police to help him go collect his daughter, a habitual runaway.

While on the loose, the girl would often seek out her mother, a heroin addict, until another teenager introduced her to Hinton, who in turn introduced her to Jones, her father said.

Children in such situations are particularly vulnerable to predators like Jones and Hinton, who promise them a certain lifestyle and income and ultimately trap them into a life of exploitation, Clay County prosecutor Pam Harris said.

"There's something missing in these girls' lives," she said.

Harris said investigators found that the sex traffickers in the case planned to head west to conduct further prostitution.

The victim has since been returned to her father and undergone treatment, Harris said.

"She's gotten a lot of help, and she's in a good place right now," the prosecutor said.

Harris said she planned to ask Judge Galen Vaa to sentence Jones to anywhere from 15 to 16½ years. State sentencing guidelines call for a prison term upon conviction for first-degree sex trafficking from 7½ to 20 years, depending on an offender's criminal history.

Vaa ordered a presentence investigation before Jones's sentencing, which is set for May 11.

Jones's attorneys declined to comment.

Hinton was sentenced to four years in prison last month after pleading guilty to soliciting a person to participate in prostitution.