

A study of the minor characters in the serial trial and the murder of hae min lee...

Law



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Throughout the Serial Podcast we have come to know and understand several individuals. Sarah Koenig has lead us through this series giving us bits and pieces along the way regarding a pending murder case from 1999; this case was the murder of Hae Min Lee. Koenig has introduced us to all of the major suspects regarding the case. Adnan Syed was convicted for the murder of Lee and is currently in prison. The case has recently been re-opened in 2016 regarding the speculation of Syed's innocence and the justice of Lee's death. As the case has progressed and re-opened recently I can't help but to present the question of, " Where are they now?". Through background information, Serial fans can now see a new perspective of the individuals involved in the case.

In this paper I will be giving an update on the less notable characters in the Serial Trial and work my way down to the main suspects. I found it very interesting throughout my research just how easy it was to find all of the main suspects involved in the case through the internet. I was able to find that most individuals in the case stayed in Maryland after the murder of Lee and also after they all graduated from high school. I was not expecting to be able to find them all in Maryland still. I would have assumed they would have gone away to college or moved on and started a family but most individuals stayed in Maryland. Several of the Serial individuals were easily found through the Maryland court system. Unfortunately, most of the individuals involved in the case now have a criminal background. Many of the individuals have a record due to them selling and possessing marijuana; a handful of others have been arrested for counts of fraud and debt.

Aside from the individuals being easily found through court records, some of the Serial members were able to easily be found because they have promoted themselves so much. Asia McClain has her own book and website now and can simply be found and searched by her first and last name. Rabia Chaudry also has easily been found due to her partaking in her own podcast regarding Adnan's innocence and the book she had written. I hope the readers can be enlightened throughout this paper on where these individuals are now and gain a new perspective on who they are as the case has been opened back up.

Jennifer “Jenn” Pusateri:

Listeners may remember “Jenn” Pusateri as Jay Wild's friend in high school and during a police interview she said she had seen Wild and Syed together on the night of the murder and that Pusateri had been notified by Wilds that Syed had murdered Lee. Koenig states, “ Sometimes unwittingly or not, Jay's testimony is almost poetic. He says he told Jenn Pusateri to be honest with the detectives because “ the lies that we were telling to try to protect each other were clouding the truth.” (The Deal with Jay: Serial, 2016, 12: 23)

Pusateri also played an intriguing role in the case when looking at cell phone records. According to the call log provided on the Serial Podcast website, Syed's call record shows that he called Pusateri numerous times the night of the suspected murder. Pusateri is labeled as Wild's friend and that her information regarding the murder was provided via Wild's. (Koenig, Serial, 2016) Syed had called her many times late the night of the murder and we have been told as listeners that she had only been told by Wild's that he killed Lee (Koenig, Serial, 2016).

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Pusateri being a friend of Wild's made me question whether or not she had a partaking in Wild's weed smoking and if she was close to Wild's for this reason. Trying to find information on Pusateri was not exactly challenging. I was able to find Pusateri's public access court documents and see that she has had numerous charges for the past decade for possession of marijuana and paraphernalia (Maryland Open Access 2016). Pusateri has had an active criminal record from 2008-2014. Most of which are for possession of marijuana. There was no information regarding the Serial case in her record, so the detectives were unable to pin any blame or wrongdoing on Pusateri. Koenig goes on in an episode to talk about Pusateri's involvement and her testimony to the police saying, " They were suspicious of Adnan from the beginning, then from Adnan's cell records, they get to Jenn, who leads them to Jay, who tells them it's Adnan." (The Deal With Jay: Serial, 2016, 9: 28). Pusateri's involvement with Wild's seemed quite suspicious. Pusateri seems to be a messenger for Wild's and seems to be protecting someone. Since the case however, she has not had a record since 2014 and she is either still in Maryland and is trying to clean her life up or she moved away. At this point I was unable to find any further court documents surpassing 2014. So I can close Pusateri's current status on the fact that we know based on her court documents she is not in jail or prison, and she has not been able to be easily located except for being in Maryland in 2014.

Asia McClain:

McClain in 1999 at the time of the murder was Syed's classmate at Woodlawn High School. McClain has fought for Syed's innocence since the case had originally opened. McClain stated that she saw Syed at the library

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at the time of the suspected murder. She questioned Syed's innocence due to this, and remained in touch with him through letters, even though they had just been classmates she tried to make contact with him while he was in jail. During the episode titled "The Alibi" in the Serial podcast Koenig talks with Rabia Chaudry about where she or Adnan knew McClain from. Chaudry states, "But then he mentions that there was this one girl, an alibi girl. He's like, the only thing I could offer is I remember there's a girl I go to school with. Her name's Asia McClain. He's like, right after I got arrested, she wrote me a couple of letters. And she said she also went to see my family. And she said she specifically remembers me being at the library, at the public library, right after school." (The Alibi: Serial, 2016, 9: 13). Upon further investigation of McClain, as of 2016 she does not have a criminal record in the state of Maryland. That is not to say that she didn't move and have a record elsewhere.

Asia has her own website and has written her own book. Her book is titled Confessions of a Serial Alibi. The book is based on her side of the story given throughout the Serial podcast and how it had affected her life. I found this interesting because it sounds almost needy. Koenig talks about McClain saying, "Asia wrote out an affidavit on the spot. In it, she says she and Adnan spoke for about 15 to 20 minutes while she was waiting for her boyfriend to give her a ride. Quote, "We left around 2:40," unquote. Remember, Hae is supposed to be dead by 2:36. And then, the kicker- "No attorney has ever contacted me about January 13, 1999 and the above information." (The Alibi: Serial, 2016, 23: 34). One can wonder if since McClain was never contacted by attorneys that she decided to show the

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world herself. One can wonder if McClain decided to reach out for fame not for pity but because she did not feel like the court took her seriously. Her website labels the book as being “ the story of Asia McClain Chapman’s journey from ordinary library goer to becoming the Serial Podcast proclaimed alibi witness for Adnan Syed.” (McClain, 2016) It seems like she is pushing her name for a little more than it is worth. I see this as a ploy for trying to get more money and fame as the Serial case had risen in popularity recently.

McClain has remained extremely public about the entire Serial trial, and considering they were only classmates McClain really milked her involvement in this case for all it was worth. In the episode The Alibi, Koenig tells us, “ Asia said she was spooked when the private investigator came to her house. I don’t know if that’s why she didn’t testify at the hearing or why she made the call to the prosecutor. But she told me that when she got the knock at the door, quote, “ that was not cool.” Because to her, if Adnan did do it, quote, “ the last thing you want is a murderer being pissed off at you, knowing where you live.” (The Alibi: Serial, 2016, 48: 46). Even though McClain was taken aback by private investigators coming to her door, it did not stop her involvement in the case several years after the murder. McClain has her own active Facebook and Twitter accounts. Her website was created in 2014 and this seems to be when McClain really rose to being the center of the spotlight. Coincidentally enough, 2014 is also the year that Koenig began the podcast episodes for the case. McClain keeps an active blog and also holds events for people to come meet and speak with her (McClain, 2016). It feels as if Asia has created a career and a name for herself through the use of this case.

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Rabia Chaudry:

According to the people map supplied on the Serial podcast website, Chaudry is a friend of Syed's family because Chaudry's younger brother Saad is friends with Syed. Chaudry is also an attorney and has maintained Adnan's innocence since 2000. Koenig also states in the episode "The Alibi", "I first heard about this story more than a year ago when I got an email from a woman named Rabia Chaudry. Rabia knows Adnan pretty well. Her younger brother Saad is Adnan's best friend. And they believe he's innocent." (Koenig, *The Alibi: Serial*, 2016, 38: 30) According to Syed, Chaudry was the first person to send Syed a letter in prison. A quote on Chaudry's website from Syed states, "The first letter I received after being arrested in 1999 was from Rabia. Since that time until now, she has believed in my innocence and been committed to my exoneration. There is no one better to help tell my story, and no one that I trust more to tell it, than Rabia." (Chaudry, 2016). Chaudry has been the most vocal about the case besides Koenig.

She has done countless interviews and meet and greets since 2000 around the time Syed was convicted. In an interview with Chaudry she was asked what prompted her to write a book about Syed. She told the interviewer that she was exhausted and really had no thoughts about writing a book prior to about a few weeks into the Serial podcasts beginning (Chaudry, 2016). She already had a blog about the case prior to the podcast. After the podcast had aired for a few weeks Chaudry had been contacted by publishers about writing a book. She said she would do it as long as she received Syed's permission to do so. Publishers and Syed both were in agreement that

someone was going to write about the case eventually and that Chaudry was in the best position to do so considering how adamant she had been regarding Syed's innocence. (Chaudry, 2016) While her attempt to see the courts case as faulty and prove Syed's innocence has been a noble cause, it has not been without payment.

Chaudry along with her blogs and podcasts also has been selling quite a bit of merchandise relating to her and the case. She has made a career and name for herself just the same as McClain by the use of the information in the Serial case. Chaudry has just released her book on Adnan's story and his innocence and is sitting in the spotlight for her involvement in the case due to his case being reopened. It should be noted as well that she has been trying to prove Adnan's innocence since 2000, yet her book releases right around the same time the case had opened back up. Chaudry was extremely involved in Syed's life and the proving of his innocence, it only makes sense that she would attempt to continue to try and stay in the spotlight and show everyone her involvement since the case has risen to such a popularity, unlike individuals like Jay Wilds that has tried to stay completely under the radar.

Jay Wilds:

Wilds has played an interesting role in this case. Wilds was Syed's friend during the time of the murder. Syed and Wilds were regularly with one another. Wilds sold weed and would smoke with Syed. They both went to school together at Woodlawn High School and were a part of the same crowd of friends (Serial, 2016). Wilds gave a testimony against Syed that was one of the major reasons that Syed was found guilty for the murder of Lee. In <https://assignbuster.com/a-study-of-the-minor-characters-in-the-serial-trial-and-the-murder-of-hae-min-lee/>

Wilds testimony he portrayed Syed as a cold blooded killer that he had to meet with and help to hide Lee's body. When Adnan was asked about Jay he says, " With Jay, it was more so kinda like — in my mind I was like, " maybe the police are putting him up to this." (Syed, The Deal with Jay: Serial, 2016, 0: 19). Throughout all of this Wilds was not convicted of any charges even though he was an accessory to the murder of Lee. He walked away seeing no jail time and only probation that he was released from just a year later (Maryland Open Access, 2016).

Wilds has a sizable court record. Wilds court record starts of course with the probation orders he was given for the Serial case. After this Wilds has been charged for several counts of robbery, eviction, domestic abuse, assault, divorce, possession of marijuana, selling or intent to distribute marijuana, and forgery (Maryland Open Access, 2016) Although Syed and Wilds were rather young during the results of this case, Wilds had already had a court history for robbery. Police during the investigation of course had questioned Wilds and his testimony but considering the number of denied appeals and even the reopening of Syed's case, Wilds has given off the presence of a rather violent individual. (Wilds, Interview 2016) More than half of Wilds record is for assault and domestic abuse. Interestingly enough, investigators in the podcast never really looked too hard at this simple fact about Wilds that can easily be found on the internet.

Koenig and others have repeatedly tried to interview Wilds and get his side of the story. Koenig came to Wilds house to speak to him and when Koenig was asked how she found them she simply replied with, " Unfortunately, it

wasn't hard" (Serial, 2016). Wilds has tried to keep him and his family extremely under the radar of social media and any association with the case. One would think that if they had this much involvement with the case and was able to put their ex-friend away, they would want more of a spotlight for themselves, whether it be fame, publicity, or money; it seems rather off-putting to completely stay away from the spotlight. (Wilds, Interview 2016)

In public access court documents regarding Wilds, one is able to see that he had a charge for domestic abuse against his wife, and a year later he had a custody battle with his wife (Maryland open access, 2016). His ex-wife's name is Nikisha Horton. Horton was the one that wanted the whole family to stay underneath the radar and was so caught off guard when Koenig found them. (Wilds, Interview 2016) Interestingly enough, Wilds is not on any accessible social media and is not able to be searched anywhere regarding a social media account, however his ex-wife is able to be found through Facebook. One can hope and assume that the individual in the Facebook profile is the same woman; the woman on Facebook is from Maryland and has the same first and last name as the court documents.

Wilds did not choose to stay completely silent throughout the whole adventure of the Serial case and podcasts. Wilds did give an interview with The Intercept giving his side of the story and finally speaking out for the first time since Syed's conviction. When Wilds was asked why he did not cooperate with the police during the case he said it was due to him selling weed out of his grandmother's house, and this was around the time that drugs were a huge deal to the police and he didn't want to risk putting his family in jeopardy (Wilds, Interview 2016). He told the reporter that his wife

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would regularly look up Wild's name on google to make sure nothing came up and he kept his privacy. Wilds went on to say that he did this interview because he wanted to clear his name since the recent upheaval of the case. He wanted nothing more than for people to know he had a clear name in the case. Wild's has been able to maintain his privacy as much as possible (Wilds, Interview 2016). One is only able to dig as deep as his court records and his interview. As the case reopens and begins to rise to popularity again it will be interesting to see how Wilds responds to the boost in interest in his partaking in the case.

I hope throughout this paper readers were able to receive a new light on the suspects and individuals involved in the case. This case has risen to an incredible popularity through Koenig's Serial podcast, interviews of the individuals involved, and social media outlets such as Reddit and Facebook. It is important to remember that this case while it has been reopened, still was a case that took place in 1999. Individuals involved in the case have had 17 years to grow and become adults and lead their life. I hope readers were able to receive a new perspective of the people involved in the case and can look at the case with more of an open mind and a little more guidance and reassurance of who everyone is.