

NEWS RELEASE

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Jury convicts ex-probation officer of sex assault; 6 others plead guilty

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – A jury found a former probation officer guilty of rape, and a man who molested and kidnapped a child pled guilty mid-trial during the week of February 23, 2015. The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Crimes Against Persons Team also convicted another five defendants who entered guilty pleas. The proceedings were held before The Honorable Julia Lynn Gullett, The Honorable Gregory R. Hayes and The Honorable W. Robert Bell, Superior Court Judges. Court was not held on February 26, 2015, due to inclement weather.

Willie Steele, 50, was tried for 1) two counts of second-degree rape and 2) two counts of sexual activity by a custodian. The jury found him *guilty* as charged. Judge Gullett sentenced him to a total of 146-194 months in prison. In 2008, Steele was working as a probation officer in Charlotte. In this position, Steele was tasked with meeting with people who had been court-ordered to participate in supervised probation. He contacted a probationer and told her that he needed to verify her address, so he went to her apartment. Once there, Steele threatened to report that the woman had violated the terms of her probation, and then he raped her. Later, the victim was instructed to meet Steele at his office, and then he raped her in his office. The District Attorney's Office commends the victim, who testified at trial, for helping prosecutors secure justice, hold Steele accountable for his misuse of authority and protect the community from future harm.

After hearing witnesses testify against him during trial, Cristino Leon, 42, decided to plead guilty as charged to 1) two counts of first-degree kidnapping and 2) indecent liberties with a child. Judge Hayes sentenced Leon to three prison terms: 73-148 months in prison, 73-100 months in prison and 16-29 months in prison. Those sentences are to run consecutively. For more information about the case, [click here](#).

Leonardo Roque, 36, pled guilty to first-degree rape of a child. Roque was sentenced to 144-233 months in prison. Upon his release from prison, Roque must register as a sex offender and participate in satellite-based monitoring for the rest of his life.

Tremaine Lowery, 41, pled guilty to attempted second-degree rape. Lowery was sentenced to 77-105 months in prison.

Cameron Woods, 19, pled guilty to possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Woods also admitted to violating the conditions of probation for a prior conviction. For the firearm offense, Woods was sentenced to 12-24 months in prison. He was also sentenced to 5-15 months in prison for violating his probation. Those sentences are to run concurrently.

James Ryan, 34, pled guilty to felonious restraint. Ryan was sentenced to 10-21 months in prison.

Juwan Hernandez, 17, pled guilty to attempted common law robbery. Hernandez was sentenced to 6-17 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 30 months of supervised probation.

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