

# WHY DO THEY DO IT?

## ARIEL CASTRO



On May 6, 2013, the world learned of the horrific ordeal three young women endured at the house of Ariel Castro on Seymour Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio. The first woman, Michelle Knight, was abducted on August 23, 2002. She was 21 years old at the time. The second young woman, Amanda Berry, disappeared on April 21, 2003; she was almost 17 years of age at the time. The third adolescent, Georgina “Gina” DeJesus, went missing on April 2, 2004. She was 14 years old.<sup>116</sup> All three women suffered unimaginable sexual, physical, and emotional abuse for years. Amanda Berry described the conditions of her imprisonment. She was forced to sleep on a filthy mattress and had only a bucket for using the bathroom, resulting in a despicable odor. Castro would give her a bag of chips or crackers or some other food. However, this, along with other essentials such as a shower, was given at a price. Berry also mentioned that one of the cruelest deeds was when Castro would play “mind games.” DeJesus stated that Castro made her play “Russian roulette.”

On Christmas Day, 2006, Amanda Berry gave birth to a little girl, Jocelyn. As she grew older, Castro allowed Jocelyn certain freedoms that were not given to Knight, Berry, or DeJesus. While Jocelyn was often locked in with the three women, on occasion, Castro would allow her to go outside to play in the backyard or the park or attend Sunday services. Berry stated that “she loved him and he loved her.” However, she was nervous

because she was never sure if he would sexually abuse Jocelyn.

After 10 years, the women finally escaped. One day, Berry realized that the bedroom door was unlocked and Castro was not in the home. A neighbor, Charles Ramsey, helped Berry free herself from the padlocked storm door. Subsequently, Berry called 911. On August 1, 2013, Ariel Castro was sentenced to life plus 1,000 years. He pled guilty to 937 counts of kidnapping and rape. On September 3, 2013, he committed suicide by hanging himself in his prison cell.<sup>117</sup>

Findings from a report by a prison mental health clinician prior to Castro’s suicide revealed that he believed that his victims were equally to blame for his crimes. He stated that his behavior was due to his addiction to pornography. The report noted that Castro was a deeply troubled man who was simultaneously pompous, demanding, happy, paranoid, and frustrated. While in prison, he was warned on numerous occasions to wear clothes in his cell when female corrections officers were present. He would ask for clean underwear and bedding while claiming, “Still nothing gets done. I don’t know if I can take this neglect anymore, and the way I’m being treated. . . . I feel as though I’m being pushed over the edge, one day at a time.” Castro was diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder with antisocial features. However, he was not considered a high suicide risk.<sup>118</sup>

### THINK ABOUT IT:

1. What should the criminal justice system do for offenders such as Castro?
2. Do you think there is a strong link between individuals with mental health issues and criminal behavior?
3. Should there be more coordination and collaboration between the criminal justice and mental health systems?