

## **Statements on behalf of Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus and Michelle Knight:**

### **Statement from Michelle Knight:**

“To Judge Russo: I would like to tell you what 11 years of my life was like: I missed my son every day.

I wondered if I was ever going to see my son again--he was only 2 1/2 when I was taken. I would look inside my heart and see my son.

I cried every night. I felt so alone. I worried about what might happen to the other girls and me every day. The days never got shorter. The nights turned into days.

The days turned into years. The years turned into eternity. I knew nobody cared about me. He told me my family didn't care about me. He tormented me constantly, especially on holidays. Christmas was the most traumatic day because I didn't get to spend it with my son. No one should ever have to experience what we went through. Not even an enemy!

Gina and I were a team. I never let her fall and she never let me fall. She nursed me back to health when I was dying from his abuse. My friendship with Gina is the only good thing to come from this situation. We said we'll all get out alive some day and we did!”

To Ariel Castro: I remember all of the times you came home talking about everyone else that did someone wrong. You acted like you weren't doing anything wrong. You said "at least I didn't kill you". You took 11 years from my life, but I've got my life back!

I spent 11 years in hell. Now your hell is just beginning. I will overcome all that happened, but you're going to face hell for eternity! From this moment on, I am NOT going to let you define me or affect who I am. I will live on but you will die a little more inside each day as you think of those 11 years and the atrocities you inflicted on us.

What does God think of you hypocritically going to church each Sunday and then coming home to torture us? The death penalty would be the easy way out; you don't deserve that! We want you to spend the rest of your life in prison! I can forgive you but I'll never forget. With God's guidance, I'll prevail and help other victims who may have suffered at the hands of another.

Writing this statement gives me the strength to be a stronger woman and know that there are more good people than evil. I know there's a lot of people going through hard times but they need someone to reach out a hand for them to hold and let them know they are being heard. After a long 11 years, I am being heard and it feels liberating!”

### **Statement from Beth Serrano on behalf of Amanda Berry:**

“My name is Beth Serrano. I am Amanda Berry's sister. The impact of these crimes on our family is something that we do not want to discuss with people we don't know. Even if I wanted to talk about it, it is impossible to put into words. For me, I lost my sister for all those years and thought it was forever. And we lost my mother forever. And she died not knowing. My mother and my sister, the two most loving people in the world. It is impossible to put into words how much it hurts.

Amanda is not here today. She is strong, beautiful, inside and out, and is doing better every day. She's not just my only sister, but the best friend I have and the best person I know. She does not want to talk about these things. She has not talked about these things even with me. And she does not want other people to talk about these things.

The main reason she does not want anyone to talk about these things, or be forced to talk about these things, is because she has a daughter. She would like to be the person who decides what to tell her daughter, when to tell her daughter, and how to tell her daughter certain things.

When people say things and file things in court, it is public. It gets written about and talked about. By people we don't know. Amanda's concern is that her daughter will hear about things, or read about things, said by the wrong people, the wrong way, at the wrong time. Before Amanda thinks the time is right to tell her daughter. My sister has asked me to say the same thing she has been saying since this case started. Please respect her privacy.

She does not want other people to talk or write about what happened. Now that there will be no trial, there doesn't seem to be any reason at all why people cannot do what she asks.

Amanda did not control anything for a long time. Please let her have control over this, so she can protect her daughter. She will do anything to protect her daughter. She also asked me to say that she is grateful this case is over.

She wanted me to say thank you to people that have supported her and our family, including James Wooley, Henry Hilow, Heather Kimmel and everyone at the Jones Day law firm, the FBI, the Cleveland Police, the DeJesus family, the entire community and everyone else who's continued to stand by our side. We appreciate everyone's support and kindness. Thank you."

**Statement from Sylvia Colon on behalf of Gina DeJesus:**

"My name is Sylvia Colon and I am a cousin and spokesperson for the DeJesus family. We have enjoyed our low-key lives and pray we can continue to savor our privacy.

On behalf of my entire family, we would like to thank the Honorable Judge Michael Russo, Office of Prosecutor Timothy McGinty and staff, as well as the defense team for the accelerated resolution to the Castro case. Today we will close this chapter of our lives.

Family members — we love you. To our friends, neighbors, FBI, Cleveland Police, Attorney Henry Hilow and our attorneys at Jones Day, the great City of Cleveland and too many others to name— thank you and God bless you. For nine long years you have been by our sides, encouraging and supporting us. We shall never forget you. You are now a part of our family.

To Ariel Castro's family — we are saddened that you are burdened with this horror and will unfortunately forever be tied to these atrocities. Please know that we do not hold you accountable and pray that you can one day be whole again. Continue to love and support one another—we promise you that with this recipe you will be triumphant.

Our family recognizes it is not for us to judge or determine any punishment. Only a higher power can do that.

Today is the last day we want to think or talk about this. These events will not own a place in our thoughts or our hearts. We will continue to live and love.

We stand before you and promise you that our beloved family member thrives. She laughs, swims, dances, and more importantly she loves and is loved. We are comforted in knowing that she will continue to flourish. She will finish school, go to college, fall in love, and if she chooses, will get married and have children. She is where we will continue to put in our energy. She lives not a victim, but as a survivor. Her insurmountable will to prevail is the only story worth discussing.

We ask that you continue to give her and our family privacy as we continue this journey back into society.

To Ariel Castro — Que Dios se apiade de su alma.”

**Statement from Kathy Joseph, attorney for Michelle Knight:**

“Michelle is a warrior who has survived a long and brutal war. She has emerged strong, courageous and determined. Her optimistic outlook is remarkable. Her resiliency and compassion are a testament to the strength of the human spirit and an inspiration to all of us who have come to know her.”

**Statement from Jim Wooley, attorney for Amanda Berry and her family:**

“Everyone should have a sister like Beth Serrano. Everyone should have a sister like Amanda Berry. And everyone should have a mother like Amanda Berry. I see nothing but sunny days ahead for this family.

I have literally run out of words to describe how remarkable Amanda, Beth and their family are. When I say they are perhaps the toughest, strongest, most resilient people I have ever known, it still feels like a huge understatement. Add to the mix the warmth, kindness and love in that household, and you're talking about something beyond perfect, beyond words.

I feel humbled and privileged that I know them.”

**Statement from Henry Hilow, attorney for Gina DeJesus and her family:**

“Gina is a survivor who is surrounded by a devoted family. Through the years, her parents, Felix and Nancy, never surrendered to hopelessness. Her parents knew there would be a day when Gina would return home. On May 6, 2013, their faith prevailed and their prayers were answered.

Gina and the DeJesus family want to thank the public and media for protecting their privacy and trust that their privacy will continue to be respected throughout the healing process. They are humbled by the love and generosity of the community.

Love is one of life's greatest gifts. Gina's return home, into the loving arms of her family, is an immeasurable blessing. It is priceless.”