

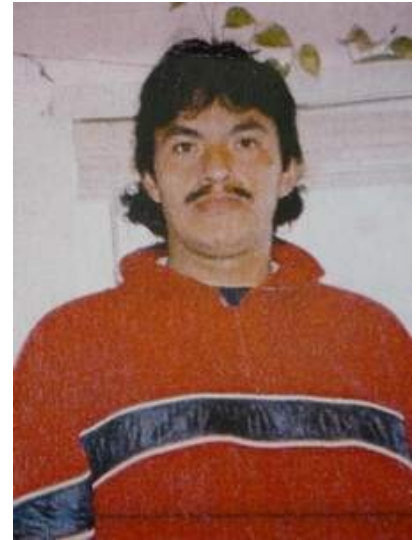
PEEKSKILL — Narcisa Serrano left Westchester Medical Center on Friday afternoon, she said, before her comatose older brother, Julio Serrano, was scheduled to have both a feeding tube and tracheal tube inserted so that he could breathe and eat.

Narcisa Serrano has been keeping vigil at the hospital since Julio Serrano, 39, was savagely beaten May 15 on the streets of Peekskill. The Hispanic laborer was walking home on Nelson Avenue when four people assaulted him early Saturday, police said.

Jarron Sligh, 23, Ronnie Juett, 23, Jamal Walker, 19, and Keith Walker, 18, have been charged with first-degree gang assault in connection with the apparently unprovoked attack and are being held at the Westchester County jail without bail, police said. Jamal Walker and Keith Walker are not related.

On Friday, Narcisa Serrano described the extent of her brother's injuries, including a ruptured kidney that doctors removed — the result of his being kicked and punched over and over again — and multiple brain hemorrhages. She said every bone in his face was broken.

"Doctors say they don't know if he will be able to hear, to speak or walk again," said Narcisa Serrano, 30. "We are completely destroyed. There's no reason why they did this to him."



Narcisa Serrano described her brother as tranquil and someone who often stayed home to watch her three children. She said she is certain the attack was racially motivated. Julio Serrano, she said, moved to Peekskill eight years ago from Ecuador to work in construction and never had problems with anybody. The siblings live together.

"There's no other explanation," she said. "They didn't rob him. He still had his phone and his keys."

Earlier this week, Peekskill police said they were investigating whether the attack was a hate crime. But on Friday, Police Chief Eugene Tumolo said that while the hate-crime aspect "is certainly a viable part of our investigation" nothing at this point indicates that Serrano was targeted because he is Hispanic.

"I've been in touch with the District Attorney's Office and we are exploring that aspect of the incident, but we have to work with fact, and we're not going to do anything to compromise the investigation," he said. "There's been nothing so far that points to it (as a hate crime)."

Narcisa Serrano, who has lived in Peekskill for six years and whose husband manages Delicias Del Mar, an Ecuadorean restaurant on North Division Street, said she thinks racial assaults do occur in the city but are rarely reported by the Hispanic community because of fear that the police will check a person's immigration status.

There's never been a case as severe as her brother's, she said.

The attack was condemned by local religious leaders. The Rev. Michael J. Champion, president of the Peekskill Area Pastors Association, issued a statement from PAPA denouncing the violence.

"We pledge our solidarity with the Serrano family," the statement said. "... We likewise share their call for justice for their brother, cousin and loved one and for all of the vulnerable people like him, who each day, face the fear of discrimination and violence. Our message is that we will not tolerate more violence, more hatred, more prejudice or more disregard for dignity of our fellow residents."

A Mass will be celebrated for Julio Serrano on Sunday night at Assumption Church.

Meanwhile, the four suspects are due Monday morning in City Court.

"I hope they receive the maximum punishment," Narcisa Serrano said. "We don't want this to happen to anyone else in the community."

www.lohud.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=20105220335

By Marcela Rojas, staff writer Terence Corcoran contributed to this report.

2 MORE PEEKSKILL MEN CHARGED IN BEATING OF HISPANIC MAN

PEEKSKILL — Two more arrests were made Thursday in the beating of a Hispanic laborer, an attack denounced by local religious leaders and which is being investigated as a hate crime.

Julio Serrano, 39, a native of Ecuador, was walking home on Nelson Avenue early Saturday when four people attacked him. He was taken to Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, where he remained in critical condition Thursday, police said.

Sgt. Raymond Henderlong announced two more arrests — Jamal Walker, 19, and Ronnie Juett, 23, both of Peekskill. They join Peekskill residents Keith Walker, 18, no relation to Jamal Walker, and Jarron Sligh, 23, and are charged with first-degree gang assault.

Police Chief Eugene Tumolo said police are investigating whether Serrano was targeted because he is Hispanic. If so, the suspects could be charged with a hate crime.

"It looks like the attack was unprovoked," Henderlong said. "The victim was walking along, going home."

The four suspects are being held without bail. They are due in City Court on Monday.

The Rev. Michael J. Champion, president of the Peekskill Area Pastors Association, issued a statement decrying the violence.

"We can only feel great sadness at this blatant disregard for human life and the dignity of all persons," it said. "We pledge our solidarity with the (victim's) family. Our prayers are with them during this most concerning time. We likewise share their call for justice for their brother, cousin and loved one and for all of the vulnerable people like him, who each day face the fear of discrimination and violence."

Champion is from the Descent of the Holy Spirit Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Montrose.

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By Terence Corcoran

PEEKSKILL — While four city men charged with felony assault in the brutal beating of an Ecuadorean immigrant appeared briefly Monday in City Court, members of the Peekskill Area Pastors Association rallied outside in an effort to end what one minister called "this senseless violence."

The four defendants — Jamal Walker, 19; Ronnie Juett, 23; Jarron Sligh, 23; and Keith Walker, 18, no relation to Jamal Walker — are charged with first-degree gang assault in the May 15 beating that left 39-year-old Julio Serrano in critical condition at the Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla.

Police have not found a motive for the attack, in which Serrano was beaten so badly that it broke every bone in his face and caused severe internal injuries. Police continued to investigate Monday whether the assault that occurred around 1:30 a.m. in front of Serrano's Nelson Avenue home was racially motivated but have not charged any of the four with a hate crime.

"We're still investigating that angle and are interviewing witnesses," Lt. Eric Johansen said.

The defendants were assigned attorneys in court and had their cases continued to June 7. They were returned to the Westchester County jail without bail, although their respective lawyers reserved the right to argue for bail at a later time. City Judge William Maher also issued temporary orders, directing the men to stay away from their alleged victim.

Narcisa Serrano said her brother, a laborer, awoke from a coma Saturday but that he is still unable to speak.

"He's getting better, thank God," she said Monday.

Narcisa Serrano said she attended a Mass celebrated Sunday night in her brother's name at Assumption Church and is grateful for the community's support. Serrano has said she is convinced that the beating was a bias crime, noting that her brother wasn't robbed.

Several members of the Pastors Association attended the hearing and have scheduled a meeting from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday at Hudson River Health Care, 1037 Main St., to allow community residents to discuss ways to end violence.

"I'm here today because our community needs to come together to heal and we're hoping we can start the healing," said the Rev. Jeannette Phillips of the Park Street AME Zion Church in Peekskill.

The Rev. Dawn Sangrey of the Fourth Unitarian Society in Mohegan Lake said she was disturbed by "this senseless violence."

"I'm so distressed by the extent of the physical injuries to the victim and the randomness of the violence," Sangrey said.

"It seems to me that we have to stand up as a community and say this type of hatred has to stop," she said.

One of the four defendants, Sligh, has several misdemeanor cases pending in Peekskill City Court. In July, Sligh was charged with second-degree burglary, a felony, and fourth-degree criminal mischief, a misdemeanor, after he and two other men were spotted by police walking a motorcycle down Pemart Avenue that turned out to be stolen.

"Our message at this point is that we're taking a 'no tolerance' position toward violence in the greater Peekskill area and we will do everything we can to make sure things like this don't happen again," said Bishop Michael J. Champion, president of the Pastor's Association and of the Descent of the Holy Spirit Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Montrose.



Jamal Walker



Ronnie Juett



Jarron Sligh



Keith Walker

www.lohud.com/article/20100525/NEWS02/5250339/4-beating-suspects-to-appear-in-Peekskill-City-Court

By Terence Corcoran and Marcela Rojas