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Jehovah's Witness Accused Of Child Molestation Claims 'False Allegations'

He is charged with 9 felony counts of lewd/lascivious acts with a minor younger than 14 and 1 count felony kidnapping for child molesting.

By CA Patch (Patch Staff) - (<https://patch.com/users/ca-patch>) April 6, 2017 6:10 pm ET

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SANTA ANA, CA — A Santa Ana man molested four girls aged 8 to 12 that he met through his Jehovah's Witness congregation, a prosecutor alleged Thursday, but the defendant's attorney told jurors that her client was a

victim of "false accusations."

Jose Luis Aguilera, 42, is charged with nine counts of lewd or lascivious acts with a minor younger than 14 and one count of kidnapping for child molesting, all felonies.

Some of the allegations date back to January 2012, continuing through July 2015 when he was initially confronted by police.

Aguilera was first confronted about allegedly molesting the girls after he took one of the victims to his apartment in Santa Ana on July 22, 2015, Senior Deputy District Attorney Heather Brown said.

The defendant told the girl's mother that he planned to take her daughter and his 6-year-old daughter to a Chuck E. Cheese restaurant, Brown said. When he arrived to pick up the alleged victim, his daughter was not with him, Brown said.

Aguilera told the girl he needed to stop by his apartment to change his shirt and then he would pick up his daughter at school so they could all go to the restaurant, Brown said. When they got there, Aguilera changed his shirt and then pulled down the pants of the girl, who was so "distracted" that she ran out of the room crying and washed her face in the bathroom, Brown said.

Aguilera took the girl with him to pick up his daughter and sign her out of school, and then they went to another restaurant, Brown said. The alleged victim was so upset that she didn't eat, so the defendant got his money back and took the girls to Chuck E. Cheese, where the alleged victim threw up, Brown said.

Aguilera told his daughter that the girl had an upset stomach because she ate a bag of peanuts, the prosecutor said.

When the girl got home, she was inconsolable and wouldn't talk to her older sister, but told her parents what happened when they got home, Brown said.

The girl's parents called police the next day and they set up a "covert call" between the defendant and the alleged victim, Brown said. The prosecutor told jurors to listen carefully to the defendant's responses in the call as Aguilera's wife comes and goes from the room during the conversation.

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Other parents started talking after hearing the rumors about the congregation's elders and a police investigation, Brown said. One of the moms remembered a year earlier babysitting the defendant's daughter, who said she saw her father kissing another girl, Brown said.

A discussion about that alleged incident led the parents to two other girls who claimed to have been molested, Brown said.

Under questioning from police, Aguilera initially denied touching any of the girls, but later gave confusing and inconsistent replies that included claims that he couldn't

remember whether he molested the girls or not.

Aguilera's attorney, Sara Ross of the Orange County Public Defender's Office, said, "This is a case of false stories, false memories and false accusations."

Ross noted that two of the alleged victims are cousins and three of the four were in the same congregation. Two of the girls go to the same school, she said.

The defense attorney said the congregation conducted its own investigation of the allegations and kicked her client out. All of the talking among the congregants prompted the girls to make false allegations, and social workers also asked the girls questions in a way that put details into their stories that weren't there before, Ross alleged.

Ross said she plans to have experts testify on the Jehovah's Witness religion and the psychiatry of false memories and suggestive questioning. One girl changed her story four times over multiple interviews, she said.

One girl initially denied she was molested, Ross said, adding the girl told police, "He's nice to me. He gave me a teddy bear."

Brown alleged the defendant plied the girls with money and gifts and took them to eat at Burger King to keep them from saying anything about the molestation.

Santa Ana Police Department Photo

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